

How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse

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Summary: Six months have passed since How to Speak Dragonese and Berk is celebrating Hiccup and Astrid's engagement. During the festivities, a powerful dragon attacks, turning Hiccup into a half-dragon. After three years, Hiccup takes it into his own hands to regain his humanity with the help of his sister, Kyra. However, cheating a dragon's curse isn't the easiest task in the world.

1. 1: Never Hide anything from Astrid

****Key:****

Normal speech

Thoughts/emphasis

****Dragonese****

****_Telepathic communication_****

****Chapter One: Never Hide Anything from Astrid****

****_Welcome to Berk " again. By now, you should know most of what needs to be known about this place. You know, Meridian of Misery; North of Hopeless; South of Freezing-to-Death...all that jazz. Prone to dragons, like me, Berk is one of the liveliest islands in the Archipelago. Oh, I'm Toothless, by the way. Berk is also one of the toughest places to live, seeing as the food is tough and tasteless and the weather is not particularly ideal. Then again, we're talking Vikings here " it's an occupational hazard. Oh, speaking of hazards..._****

THUNK!

"OI! Watch it, will you?"

"How 'bout you come over here and try to deal with a dragon's toothache?!" Gobber the Belch yelled at a passing Viking who'd nearly been hit on the head by a flying tooth from the Deadly Nadder he'd been tending to. Gobber had been Dragon Dentist for about a year now but he was still prone to causing accidents he refused to admit responsibility for â€" this tooth incident was the fifth one this month.

"Gobber, it might be better if you took things a little more gently," Stoick the Vast sighed as he was passing by. Gobber let the purple Deadly Nadder go, now toothache free, and rolled his eyes.

"We're Vikings, Stoick," he reminded the chief. "I'm not entirely sure if 'gently' is even in our vocabulary." Stoick chuckled â€" his old friend could really be comically sarcastic at times. "Anyhow, I've been waiting for Hiccup for over an hour now â€" where's he got to?"

"He's been as jumpy as a rabbit in the springtime recently," Stoick explained. "I honestly don't know what's gotten into that boy..."

"OW! "

Stoick and Gobber winced as Mulch passed the Chief's House by the Great Hall only to have an old sword hilt land on his head as it came flying out of the top floor window. The sword hilt wasn't the only thing to be thrown out â€" moments later a helmet, the Book of Dragons and even some tunics came falling to the ground. Stoick shook his head â€" just like he'd been saying seconds ago. He walked back over to the house to hear a familiar nasal voice repeating the same phrase over and over again.

"Where is it? Where is it? Where is it?" the voice mumbled.

"Uh, Hiccup?" Stoick called. Inside, a gangly teenager with dark auburn-brown hair, forest green eyes and a spring-loaded prosthetic left leg glanced up from looking through the chest in his room at the sound of his father's voice.

"Huh...DOUCH!" Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III yelped as he dropped the lid on his head and stumbled around his room for a bit before tripping down the stairs and landing in the fish basket...again. Stoick winced and headed indoors to help his son out.

"Hiccup, are you alright?" Stoick frowned, helping his son to his feet. Hiccup recovered from his brief concussion and headed outdoors.

"Yeah, yeah â€" I'm fine, Dad," he replied. "Whatever it is, I'll be right with you. There're just a few things I need to do first: the dragons' food needs to be changed, sheep at the back of the barn need to be rotated...oh, and then I need to head out with Toothless to make sure Mildew's not planning something else with the Outcasts to get the dragons off Berk and therefore leaving us vulnerable to attack. Okay...okay..." he recited at top speed, heading in the direction of the dragons' stables. Stoick noticed his son wringing his hands â€" their relationship may not have been the best over the years but Stoick never missed a thing when his son was nervous. Not

to mention he'd done his spot of spying on the Outcasts and Mildew merely the previous week!

"Son, you still haven't found that ring yet, have you?" he sighed.

"NO!" Hiccup cried, exasperated. "And I've got to make the proposal official today â€" I can't find it anywhere!" Since randomly letting slip his true feelings for Astrid Hofferson in the middle of a battle with the Outcasts six months ago, Hiccup and his then-girlfriend-now-fiancÃ©e had been hand-fastened to marry when they turned sixteen. Hiccup had spent the last six months working on Astrid's engagement ring himself (as well as his own). He'd taken so much care into it that it had been reshaped countless times to make sure that it was the perfect fit for Astrid except now he'd mislaid it somewhere and had no clue as to where on Berk it was.

"Don't worry, Hiccup," Stoick comforted, placing a hand on his son's shoulder. "Very soon, the entire village will be celebrating the engagement of their future chief. It will be a momentous occasion for everyone." At this, Hiccup cast a cynical glare at his father.

"You remember I wanted this to be a private thing, Dad?" he reminded him. Given all the attention he already had as a hero nowadays, the last thing Hiccup really wanted was an engagement party. Unfortunately for him, pretty much everyone else in the village disagreed, especially his older sister, Valkyra.

"Yes, right," Stoick nodded, not really listening. "Of course. HAS ANYONE FOUND THE RING?!" he bellowed, nearly deafening his son again. Hiccup swore to the gods that he was the only Viking on Berk who didn't have hearing problems and he wanted it to stay that way. Most of the village knew of Hiccup's crisis, save Astrid who had actually been kept in the dark about the whole thing (miraculously, given some of the Vikings' tendency for letting important information slip). Almost every villager was searching a different part of Berk.

"It's your turn to search in there!" Tuffnut Thorston snapped by the barn, shoving his twin sister, Ruffnut, towards the entrance. However, she did a rather fancy move where she grabbed her brother and managed to shove him inside the barn instead. To be honest, Hiccup could see why no one had volunteered to search there â€" it had been by his dad's request and the fact that Ruffnut and Tuffnut had been causing trouble with the livestock again that had landed them that job.

"I searched in there the last time!" Ruffnut snapped back as her brother fell into a water trough.

"Well, I'm going by the ladies first procedure!"

"And I'm saying I've already been!"

Hiccup rolled his eyes and facepalmed â€" seriously, give the twins a task that doesn't involve blowing something up with their Hideous Zippleback, Barf-Belch, and there was no way they would get it done even if you gave them a whole year...which Hiccup didn't exactly have right now. Fishlegs Ingerman flew over on his Gronkle, Meatlug, seconds later.

"Sorry, I couldn't find it at Thor's Beach," he shrugged apologetically. "But there we go, keep looking." Hiccup had highly doubted that the ring would be too far from the village anyway but it had been worth a shot. A black dragon covered in silver-white markings with a sparking forked tail landed close by, mounted by a girl who looked a lot like Hiccup with the exception of her having two feet and a golden-green left eye that looked a lot like a dragon's. This was Valkyra Horrendous Haddock II, Hiccup's elder sister and also the Dragon Shifter â€" the human incarnation of the Goddess of Dragons. To everyone who knew her, she was known simply as Kyra.

"Well, it's not at the Rookery," she explained, dismounting the Star Backed Night Fury. "Windwalker and I checked everywhere." Again, it had been worth a go â€" Hiccup had gone to the dragons' Rookery multiple times for some peace and quiet whilst making the ring. Hiccup's cousin, Snotlout Jorgenson, arrived shortly afterwards.

"Found it!" he crowed after exiting the Great Hall. Hiccup ran over excitedly.

"You found the ring?" he grinned. Unfortunately it turned out that Snotlout hadn't been looking for the ring and had instead found his dad's old hatchet â€" why it had been in the Great Hall and no one had noticed it before now was anyone's guess. Hiccup groaned and went back to search the forge. "Great â€" this is just great. This whole engagement's now gonna be totally screwed and all because I can't find that stupid ring!" he cried, folding his arms in frustration and not noticing his sister walk up behind him.

"Hiccup, look under your foot," she suggested, indicating her younger brother's prosthetic. Hiccup turned around and glared at the girl in the eye. Initially he hadn't even been able to keep eye contact with her after Alvin the Treacherous had shot her in the eye six months ago and her forest green left eye had been replaced by a golden-green Night Fury one but these days he was used to it. It was when both eyes went dragon-like that people had to worry about her.

"Don't be stupid, Kyra!" he growled. "The ring is not under my foot!"

"Would you just look?" Kyra insisted. Hiccup groaned and obliged â€" it was times like this that he missed being an only child.

"See? No ring," he pointed out, keeping his balance by leaning on the workbench. "Just a spring-loaded prosthetic."

"Exactly," Kyra nodded. "And that's the only thing Astrid needs to know who she's engaged to, with or without that ring." Hiccup sighed â€" his sister was right.

"I'm sorry, Kyra," he sighed. "It's just...you know it's not been easy. This is the one time I've been able to show confidence of some kind...OW!" he exclaimed as Kyra clapped a hand over his head.

"Two words for you: useless romantic," she joked, running back out of the forge into the village.

"Kyra!" Hiccup cried after her. "Not helping!" A roar sounded from

the skies and a pink and yellow Monstrous Nightmare descended to the village from the direction of the forest. Mounted on the Nightmare's neck was a girl around Hiccup's age with black hair woven into a side plait and pale green eyes. It was Heather, a close friend of the teens and an honorary member of the Riders of Berk ever since they helped her free her parents from the Outcasts. Kyra had been introduced to the girl merely a few weeks ago and was already fast friends with her.

"Hey, guys!" Heather called as her dragon, who she'd named Newtsbreath, landed. "Guys! Guys! Okay...well, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news."

"What news?" Ruffnut called from the stables, now having her brother in a headlock. Kyra was actually mildly impressed at the twins' multitasking skills â€" heck, even she couldn't hold someone in a lock of any kind and still be able to hold conversation with someone else. Heather dismounted Newtsbreath and ran over to Hiccup, fishing something out of her pocket.

"Good news is I found that ring you were looking for, Hiccup," she smiled. Hiccup's face lit up.

"Heather! Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" he grinned, tucking the gold band into his pocket. "Where did you find it?"

"That would be the bad news," Heather grimaced, indicating the forest. She gave Hiccup a small frown. "She's waiting in the Cove." Hiccup froze.

"Damn..." he muttered. He turned to Kyra. "If I don't come back out in half an hour, send Toothless in," he pleaded. Kyra rolled her eyes. This was only to have been expected. Even so she nodded her agreement.

Hiccup slowly made his way through the trees towards the Cove. He'd really hoped that he would be able to avoid this but, knowing who he was dealing with, he should have guessed that his chances of keeping the whole thing a surprise were slim at best. Reaching the Cove, he braced himself for the beating he knew he was about to get and headed down into the Cove to see a Nordic Blonde with storm blue eyes and holding a double-bladed axe glaring at him so hard that if looks could kill, Hiccup would be six feet under three times already.

"Hey..." he mumbled. Astrid Hofferson didn't say anything and continued to glare at him. "I...uh...wasn't expecting to see you here..."

"How long did you think you could keep it from me?" Astrid growled. Hiccup avoided eye contact. "Did you think I wouldn't notice?"

"Uh...well, I...what are you...I don't know what you..." Hiccup stammered. Astrid's glare deepened if that was even remotely possible so Hiccup gave up the pretence. "Okay, I hoped you wouldn't."

"Considering that you've barely spoken to me in the past six months

and the entire village has avoided me for at least three weeks I think I'd know something was up," Astrid pointed out. Hiccup sagged. "Even Heather knew! Admit it â€" you knew I'd find out sooner or later."

"Yeah, well, I'd hoped it would be later," Hiccup groaned, bracing himself for a punch.

"Spell it out," Astrid demanded. "What have you been hiding?" Hiccup's hand unconsciously drifted to his pocket. "Thought so. You were pretty set on hiding that thing from me." Hiccup's green eyes widened.

"What? You knew?!" he spluttered. Astrid gave him one of her knowing smirks. "How am I supposed to make anything a surprise if you keep being five steps ahead of me?!"

"Because then I don't have any fun watching you panic," Astrid replied smartly. Hiccup's jaw dropped.

"_You_ hid the ring?!" he exclaimed. Astrid raised an eyebrow. "Man...!" He didn't get a chance to say anything else as Astrid socked his arm. "OW!"

"That's for keeping me in the dark," the Nordic Blonde smirked as Hiccup rubbed his arm.

"Am I always going to have to put up with this?" he asked, exasperated. "Because you know, Astrid, I really..." His sentence was cut off as Astrid kissed him. "Never get used to that..." he finished sheepishly. Astrid smiled warmly.

"Kyra's right, you know," she grinned, turning to leave the Cove and head back to the village. "You really are a hopeless romantic."

"Why do people keep saying that?!" Hiccup cried, raising his gaze to the heavens.

* * *

><p>It's finally here! Sorry it's taken so long for me to get this out - this story is going through a re-write **(I found the original to be fairly poor, personally. Main plot's staying the same)** **but I hope it's been worth the wait.**

By the way, you may want to read the prequel to this story: _How to Speak Dragonese_ before reading this one, namely because of the backstory for my OC, Kyra, and also explain the lead up to this story. I'm not going to give a summary of the story for spoiler reasons but I would highly recommend reading _How to Speak Dragonese_ before this story.

2. 2: Engagement Party Gone Wrong

Key:

Normal speech

Thoughts/emphasis

****Dragonese****

****_Telepathic communication_****

****Chapter Two: Engagement Party Gone Wrong****

Hiccup and Astrid emerged from the forest well within the half hour time limit Hiccup had set Kyra so no major panic had ensued. Kyra smiled and shook her head as the two teens walked out of the woods and into the late autumn sunlight that was gracing the Isle of Berk and glanced at Heather who shrugged in reply to the girl's '_Well, he should have guessed'_ face.

"I take it you've sorted things out, then?" Heather called to Hiccup who sheepishly made a face. Astrid marched over triumphantly.

"Yeah â€" a word to the whole village!" she announced. "Brush up on your acting skills the next time you try to hide something from me because I_ will _find it out."

"Astrid, we're Vikings," Kyra pointed out. "Our acting skills aren't exactly stellar." Kyra was the only Viking teen who could contradict Astrid and get away with it â€" all the other teens would get punched in the arm, chest or face if they tried but no one really wanted to get on Kyra's bad side. If that happened, there'd be trouble for the entire village for at least a week as Kyra entered a state where her dragon instincts would completely take over until someone (usually Hiccup) calmed her down. Okay, normally she was only in that state for a few minutes at most but the damage caused could take a few days to fix.

"Well, at least we can now be happy in the knowledge that things will be okay from now on with you two," Stoick chuckled, at which Hiccup flushed furiously. Kyra's eyes suddenly went wide.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Hiccup, didn't you say the other day that you and Astrid needed to take care of something on the Rookery?" she asked. Hiccup frowned â€" no, he couldn't remember saying that. "Just that I would go and get on with whatever it was that you needed to do now before it gets too dark. And, uh, take Windwalker with you â€" she's wanted to go to the Rookery for ages."

Astrid grinned and pulled Hiccup towards Toothless and her Deadly Nadder, Stormfly. Hiccup sighed and smiled â€" well, at least he and Astrid could get some time away from the chaos that often consumed Berk on a daily basis. Windwalker followed the couple and their dragons into the air and cooed slightly at Toothless who cringed visibly, causing his rider to chuckle. Toothless and Windwalker had become incredibly close over the last few months and Hiccup was starting to believe that his best friend had finally found that 'special someone' in his life. To be honest, he wouldn't be surprised if Windwalker flew off with the other dragons next Snoggletog and came back with a group of baby Night Furies.

Reaching the Rookery, Hiccup let Toothless race around the island with Windwalker whilst he sat with Astrid by Stormfly's side as the sun sank lower in the late autumn sky. At one point, he smiled and closed his eyes as he took in the beauty of the scenery.

"Don't go dozing off now," Astrid joked, elbowing her fiancÃ©. "We need to get back sooner or later."

"Yeah, I know," Hiccup replied, still blissfully happy with it just being him, Astrid and their dragons. He snorted as Windwalker did a double take on Toothless, causing the one-tail-fin Night Fury to fall headfirst into a hot spring before coming up spluttering. "Well, they look happy."

"Reckon we'll be seeing any mini-Furies running around next winter?" Astrid smiled. Hiccup laughed along with her. It was true that Toothless and Windwalker were incredibly close and Hiccup couldn't help but think what baby Night Furies would look like â€" if the Gronkles had been cute then there was no doubt that a miniature Night Fury would destroy anyone's cuteness-factor scale.

"Who knows?" he chuckled. He sighed. "A year and a half to go, huh?"

"Yeah," Astrid nodded. "Crazy, isn't it? To think this time last year you were one of the most hopeless Vikings around."

"Thank you for summing that up."

"Look, you know it's true," Astrid smiled. "And, like I said before, even then there is no one else on the entire island I'd rather be with, okay?" Hiccup smiled sheepishly. Astrid had admitted that she'd liked Hiccup for ages six months ago â€" the only reason she'd acted so coldly towards him was due to her pride as a Hofferson. "How do you think it'll go?"

"Knowing me?" Hiccup grimaced. "Who knows? I'm not looking forward to the new 'trust' ceremony, at any rate." Astrid raised an eyebrow. "Dad came up with the idea. If the couple have dragons, then the wife has to fly up to a high altitude and jump off her dragon while the husband has to catch her."

"And you're scared you're gonna miss?" Astrid finished.

"Well...I..."

"Hiccup, you need to stop worrying," Astrid chided. "You've managed to catch me when I've fallen off Stormfly countless times in the past and I've done the same for you on a few occasions. If there's anyone that I would trust with my life, it's you." Hiccup blushed slightly but thankfully the light was low enough so that Astrid couldn't see it. The sun was getting low on the horizon so Hiccup suggested that they headed back to Berk. He never did know why Kyra had said that he and Astrid had something to take care of at the Rookery â€" most likely that she knew that the soon-to-be-officially-engaged couple needed some time to themselves. Hiccup smiled in the knowledge that he had a sibling looking out for him no matter what.

"Where'd everybody go?" Astrid frowned when they landed back on Berk. Hiccup shared the grimace â€" the entire village was empty. Lights had just started being lit in houses and the setting sun cast a pink-orange glow over the island but it was so quiet it was slightly worrying. Toothless and Windwalker suddenly perked their ears up in the direction of the Great Hall and Hiccup could faintly hear the

sound of a familiar tune floating through the doors â€" the Song of the Adriatic.

"Well, at least we know where one person is," he shrugged, jogging over, his prosthetic leg barely giving him any trouble at all. Pushing the massive doors open, Hiccup searched around the Hall for his sister when he glanced upwards and nearly fell over in shock.

The Hall was covered with decorations from top to bottom. To be fair, it was nicely done â€" not too over the top and not too sparse either. Hiccup realised that a celebration of some kind must have been planned...and he had a good idea of what celebration it was.

"I _told_ him...I _told_ him..." he groaned before the singing caught his attention again.

"_Far, far away is my pearly Adriatic_" Kyra's clear voice floated down from the ceiling. Hiccup and Astrid cast their gazes upwards to see Kyra flying around the rafters â€" not with her usual Night Fury wings but hummingbird-like Gronkle ones â€" putting up and fixing more decorations. "_Far, far away...my pretty island home..._"

"Kyra?" Astrid called. Kyra stopped singing and glanced downwards towards the floor. Upon seeing her brother and best friend, along with the dragons who'd decided to poke their heads through the door, she hopped down and landed lightly on her feet as the wings vanished from her back.

"Hiccup! Astrid!" she greeted cheerfully. "I wasn't expecting you back for at least another hour." She began ushering them both out of the Great Hall. "Why don't you two head off hunting or something? I've got some things I need to..."

"Kyra, what were you doing in there?" Hiccup groaned as his older sister shoved him and Astrid outside and shut the doors. Kyra avoided eye contact.

"Just sorting some things out for tonight," she replied offhandedly. "Dad asked. Come on â€" I want this to be a surprise for everyone..."

"Kyra! I said a billion times that I didn't want this to go public!" Hiccup snapped hysterically. Astrid rolled her eyes â€" just like Hiccup to not want things to be in the limelight every once in a while. Kyra's face changed from uncharacteristically cheery to smug as she placed her hands on her hips.

"Listen, Hiccup," she huffed. "You can hardly expect people to celebrate the _heir to their tribe_ getting engaged when there isn't an occasion to notify them."

"They _were_ notified..." Hiccup grumbled, earning himself nothing but a punch in the arm from Astrid.

"Come on, even Heather and her family are attending," Kyra sighed. Hiccup winced â€" great. Now he just needed the whole of the Barbaric Archipelago to turn up. "Besides, I've got everything planned out. It's gonna be great â€" trust me!"

"It's not that I don't trust you, Kyra," Hiccup protested. "I'm just saying..."

"Aw, you're no fun," Astrid smirked, taking Kyra's side. Hiccup cried out in exasperation at this. "Really, Hiccup, there's nothing wrong with an engagement party. Kyra's right â€" it'll be fine."

"Anyhow, you don't really have a choice in the matter," Kyra cut in, folding her arms smugly. "I, as your older sister, am forcing you to attend your own engagement party." Hiccup glared at her.

"Or you'll do what?" he glowered. Kyra remained unfazed as she answered.

"I'll tell Windwalker to rearrange your other leg."

"Alright! I'll do it!" Hiccup replied quickly. Kyra and Astrid shared a secret high-five. The dragons would do anything for Kyra â€" she was the human embodiment of their Goddess, after all â€" and Hiccup would do anything to keep his right leg intact. He'd had too many close shaves to risk another. "You've no idea how much I hate you right now," he growled.

"Hiccup, it's really not that bad," Kyra insisted. "It'll be fine."

Hiccup could see that he had no reason to worry earlier. The engagement party was in full swing by the time the sun went down and everything was going perfectly. Heck, even the music was pretty good by Viking standards. Kyra had made a note to stay off the dance floor though â€" she may have the best voice in the Archipelago but she was clumsier than her brother when it came to dancing (something which Hiccup was secretly smug about). Heather, Ruffnut and Astrid, on the other hand, were amusing themselves and others around them by having a dance-off during a particularly fast jig that was being played. Ruffnut tripped over her own feet and Astrid ran out of steam after a while so it was fair to say that Heather had won that one.

"Remind me not to enter the Archipelago Dance Contest if you're competing," Astrid panted as she and the others sat down for a mug of mead. Heather laughed and wiped a stray lock of black hair from her glistening forehead â€" dancing for three minutes straight at that pace was a workout in itself.

"Thanks for inviting us, by the way," she smiled kindly. "It's not often we get to come to occasions like this."

"Hey, it's Kyra to thank," Fishlegs shrugged. Kyra was busying herself with keeping the food from getting cold at that moment. "Gotta say she's good at this."

"Just remind her that it's the arm-wrestling rematch next Freya's Day!" Snotlout said loudly.

"Heard that!" Kyra yelled from the other side of the Hall. Hiccup snorted into his mead. Snotlout insisted on having arm-wrestling matches with Kyra even though it was clear who was the stronger of the two. Even so, he still kept trying to have a rematch. Kyra always won, though, so there was really no point to them apart from being

pre-weekend entertainment for the rest of the teens.

"Gods, I can't believe you guys are engaged!" Heather grinned. "I mean, that's pretty amazing."

"Speaking of which, Hiccup!" Kyra called as she readjusted a wonky stag antler on the wall. She shot over, still using Gronkle's wings for convenience reasons than anything else, and pushed Hiccup and Astrid onto the dance floor where everyone cleared a space. "You're forgetting the whole point of tonight."

Hiccup flushed a bright red as all eyes turned on him and Astrid in the centre of the hall. All he could say was thank the gods for the flames so that his red face went largely unnoticed. His hand drifted to his pocket where the ring he'd so carefully crafted for Astrid over the past six months remained safe this time. Astrid took a deep breath and turned to face him "Hiccup figured he might as well get it over and done with.

"Okay, I...uh...know that I don't have much choice in this..." he began sheepishly. Astrid playfully punched his shoulder. "But...um... Astrid, I get that it's been...complicated between us..."

"That's for sure," Ruffnut snickered from the sidelines. She was met with a punch from her brother and a slap round the head from Gobber.

"Yeah...uh..." Hiccup stammered. He reached into his pocket and withdrew the ring. It truly was a delicate masterpiece "a simple gold band studded with alternating diamonds and sapphires around the top half of it. On the inside was the most intricate and delicate etching of a dragon that had been done with such precision Hiccup himself had been amazed that it had turned out so well. "Astrid Hofferson, will you do me the honour of becoming my wife when we turn sixteen?" he asked with as much grace as he could muster. Astrid beamed from ear to ear.

"You already know my answer, silly," she smiled, holding out her right hand. "Yes." Hiccup took her hand and gently slipped the ring onto her ring finger where it fit like a glove. As soon as he withdrew his hand, Astrid threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, earning hoots, whistles and cheers from the crowd. Hiccup was silently happy that his sister had arranged the party now "at least he had something to remember the engagement by. Astrid broke the kiss and Hiccup reached into his own pocket for his own ring "it was a lot simpler than Astrid's, being a plain gold band with only an etching of a dragon inside to match Astrid's but it was still a piece of expert metalwork that anyone would be proud of. As soon as it was on, Astrid and Hiccup shared another hug to the response of a lot of 'awws' from the crowd.

"ARGH!" a scream came. Astrid and Hiccup broke their embrace and whipped their heads around, as did everyone else in the room to see Kyra collapsed on the floor clutching her head with her eyes screwed shut.

"Not good..." Hiccup muttered, racing over. Kyra was trembling and Hiccup could see black Night Fury scales appearing on her hands "this often happened when Kyra was worried, scared, angry or a mixture of all three.

"What...what are you?" she mumbled. Hiccup nervously placed a hand on her shoulder "as long as she knew her brother was there, Kyra was less likely to suddenly go 'dragon' on everything so it was a noteworthy safety precaution. "What do you want?"

"Who's she talking to?" Heather gulped nervously.

"Telepathy," Hiccup explained quickly. "Sometimes she doesn't know she's doing it." Kyra cast a glance at Hiccup and he nodded but asked her to keep them informed when a roar sounded outside that made everyone wince and cower in terror. Ever since Kyra accidentally scratched Hiccup's arm during a small fight they had six months ago, Hiccup had been able to understand Dragonese, the language of the dragons, so he was easily able to interpret the roar and he didn't like what he heard.

"**Nothing will stand in my way! Not even you. You will all fall!**_""

"DON'T THINK I'LL EVER LET THAT HAPPEN!" Kyra shrieked, startling everyone except Hiccup who could understand the sudden outburst. "I swear by the gods, if you put even one claw on this island, I shall..." She then screamed and clutched her head again as the Night Fury scales spread. Astrid turned her gaze towards the now open door to the Great Hall and her jaw dropped at what she saw.

"By the gods..." she whispered as she caught sight of a monstrous shadow towering over the village. The rest of the villagers also turned their eyes to face the monstrosity that now threatened their home. "Kyra...what in Niflheim is that?" Kyra just slowly and shakily picked herself up from the floor with a mixture of terror and anger filling her eyes. She shook Hiccup's hand from her shoulder and strode outside to face the beast, closely followed by her brother and friends. Hiccup couldn't help but recoil when he saw the thing.

It was almost as big, if not bigger, than the Red Death he had lost a leg fighting the previous year but looked like a cross between a Scauldron and a Monstrous Nightmare. It was a dark sea-green in colour with eyes of blood-red burning down on the village filled with pure malice and large leathery black wings that blocked the view of the horizon. It was very serpentine in appearance and was clearly a sea-dragon but when it roared and reared its head skyward, a column of green flame erupted from its mouth and with each flap of its wings it rose higher from the water. It had short legs for a dragon its size but its claws were easily the size of Night Fury, more than capable of tearing down a house or two. Its claws, horns and wings were all roped with seaweed and kelp, only adding to the terror it cast. Hiccup hadn't felt so scared looking at a dragon since he and Astrid had seen the Red Death for the first time.

"Kyra, what do we do?" he muttered but his sister hushed him with a short hiss. Clearly the conversation was now private until Kyra growled threateningly.

"**Do not get the impression that we'll go down easily**," she warned. "**Every last one of us will fight to defend our home and if we go down fighting, we're taking you to Helhiem with us!**"

Hiccup appreciated his sister's brave speech but he'd rather not die

when he'd just gotten engaged. The sea dragon growled but this one was just for show as Hiccup couldn't understand what it meant before diving into the waves. Kyra glanced at her brother and nodded.

"Right," Hiccup noted before turning to face the others. "Vikings, grab your shields!" he ordered.

The village turned into a flurry of activity as Vikings without dragons raced to the forge to grab any weapon they could lay their hands on whilst the teens and Stoick raced for their own dragons. Heather broke away from her parents who were begging her not to fight to join her friends as the Riders of Berk soared into the sky. The entire team flew into formation: Hiccup led the teens on Toothless, followed by Astrid and Kyra on Stormfly and Windwalker, behind them were the twins on Barf-Belch and Snotlout with Hookfang, and at the back were Heather and Fishlegs with Newtsbreath and Meatlug. Stoick was with his Thunderdrum, Thornado, shouting orders to the Vikings on the ground. The team was just soaring over the ocean when the gigantic dragon leapt out of the water, showering them with a waterfall of saltwater, kelp and what appeared to be a fish or two (one of which narrowly missed Snotlout's head).

"Get to a higher altitude!" Hiccup yelled. If the dragons' heads got wet, they wouldn't be able to breathe fire so they had to dry off as quickly as possible. Thankfully, the heat from the sea-dragon's flames helped a bit with that and the team soon got high enough to avoid any more water attacks. "Okay, Fishlegs, give us the run down," Hiccup called as they dive bombed for an attack of their own whilst the sea-dragon was distracted by the ground team of villagers.

"Right," Fishlegs nodded. His expertise on dragons came in handy when analysing new ones and had helped on countless occasions. "Long tail, most likely used for swimming but can probably be used for mÃlÃe attacks as well â€" stay well clear. Large wings â€" provides a blind spot. It's gonna be hard for it to see behind it. Big head with large eyes and small nostrils â€" can't see any ears from here â€" so I'm guessing it relies mostly on sight. Also be careful of those claws!"

"Got it," Hiccup nodded before switching to old-fashioned dragon fighting techniques. With any luck the team should still be alright despite the fact they hadn't exactly used them in a while. "Ruff, Tuff â€" get it annoyed and find out if it has a shot limit. Heather, Legs, Lout â€" you three concentrate your fire on the tail â€" if we can upset its balance we might stand a chance. Astrid, Kyra â€" you two and I will focus on the wings. Kyra â€" if that thing opens its mouth, whatever you do, don't miss!"

"Gotcha!" the teens chorused, flying off in the given directions. The reason why Hiccup had asked Kyra to fire into the dragon's mouth if it opened was because Kyra and Windwalker, as a team, could deal twice the amount of damage than the others given the fact that Kyra could also produce a flame thanks to her dragon-abilities. The twins got straight to work to annoying the beast, dodging flying catapults, spears and arrows as they did so and shouting out every curse they could think of.

"Ogre spawn!"

"Dwarf offspring!"

"Son of a half-troll!"

"Hey! That's mine!" Astrid yelled as she flew past on Stormfly whilst dodging a stream of green fire resulting from the sea-dragon's temper. Heather had successfully landed a hit on the monster's tail, causing it to rear up in pain and anger, giving Kyra her chance. Leaping off Windwalker and sprouting her Night Fury wings, she and her Star-Backed Night Fury raced towards the thing's head and were about to fire when the thing swung a claw in their direction.

"WHOA!" Kyra yelped and she swerved out of the way. "Hiccup! Now might be a good time to take care of those wings!"

Hiccup and Astrid were already bombarding the large wings with all the power their dragon's had but they were running out of fire as Toothless and Stormfly needed to recharge. Retreating for a while, Hiccup drew out his dagger from his belt and led Toothless forward for a full-out attack on the face. He knew it was risky but it was worth a shot and if it gave Kyra another chance to hit the non-fireproof insides of the beast, it was the best chance they had.

"Oi!" he shouted in his loudest voice "miraculously the sea-dragon heard him and turned its massive head in the boy's direction. All it saw was a scrawny Viking teen racing towards it at full pelt on the back of a Night Fury when it felt a searing pain through its left eye " Hiccup had slashed it right across the pupil, blinding it. The dragon roared in pain again and Hiccup yelled at his sister whilst he retreated. Kyra and Windwalker didn't hesitate and fired two shots of bright blue Night Fury flame. However, although the flames were on course for a perfect hit, they hit nothing but the scales surrounding the sea-dragon's mouth as if something were deflecting the flames.

"What?" Kyra frowned before going in for another try. However she yelped and had to dodge another column of green fire as the sea-dragon's good eye spotted her.

"**It will take more than your pathetic followers to stop us**," the dragon hissed. "**Soon, the dragons' true goddess shall return and the dragons shall once again follow one that is of their own kind and not a defiled human girl like you!**" Hiccup snarled when a shout from Snotlout caught his attention.

"Look out, hatchet-head!" Snotlout yelled and Hiccup led Toothless into a nosedive just in time to avoid the green fire. The flames caught Toothless' tail fin, however but instead of burning off, a coating of scales covered the fabric before immobilising it. Hiccup screeched for help which came, oddly enough, in a shot of Night Fury flame from Kyra. The flame connected with the tail fin and the scales vanished. Instead of bursting into flames, Hiccup was relieved when he found he could move the darn thing again.

"Okay, what just happened?" Astrid asked briefly.

"Something I've been working on," Kyra replied, getting back onto

Windwalker for a breather. "Seriously â€" immobilisation's a cheap party trick compared to most magic dragons are capable of."

"Magic?" the twins chorused. Fishlegs came in to save Kyra from more explanations.

"Yeah â€" dragons are mythical creatures after all," he called. "Some of their magic is so powerful that it can't be broken by normal means â€" their curses are practically unbreakable!"

"Great to know," Hiccup grimaced. "Right, everyone â€" whatever you do make sure that fire doesn't touch you! We don't know what else it can do so better to be safe than sorry." The battle resumed as the dragons' shot limits recharged. Heather, Fishlegs and Snotlout all managed to get in some hits on the tail whilst the twins joined in with helping out on the wings on Hiccup's orders. Eventually, the sea-dragon opened its mouth so Kyra and Windwalker raced upwards for one more shot at the mouth but had to jolt upwards when the beast aimed in their direction. Instead, Kyra leapt onto the sea-dragon's head and rammed her own dagger â€" a silver one with a golden hilt that Stoick had given her six months ago before she even knew who she really was â€" between the sea-green scales on the monster's head. It roared in agony and anger, tossing its head in all directions whilst Kyra struggled to hang on.

"**_Dragons â€" get out of here!_**" she screamed in her head to the other dragons. "**_Make sure your riders are safe!_**"

Reluctantly, the dragons began heading back to shore but Hiccup and Astrid forced Toothless and Stormfly to hold back, wanting to help in any way that they could. Hiccup almost froze when he heard the dragon roar out something he'd just been hoping not to hear.

"**Be powerless until the human you were taken from returns, Dragon Shifter!**" the beast roared, spitting on the word 'human' and sending up a short stream of fire that curled over onto its head and engulfing Kyra. Kyra suddenly shrieked and her dagger came loose. She tumbled off the sea-dragon's head and began falling towards the waves. Astrid could see that she was trying to sprout her wings but nothing was happening. Thankfully Windwalker swooped in and rescued her rider from hitting the water before anyone had time to blink. Hiccup squinted â€" Kyra suddenly looked exhausted. The dragon's curse had left her without any dragon magic left, including those she had as the Dragon Shifter. "**She shall return...she must...**"

"You take that back!" he shouted in anger, leading Toothless into an attack. The dragon squinted its one good eye at him and snarled.

"**The Limbless**," it noted. "**So it is you they speak of.**"

"Yeah? So what?" Hiccup glowered as Toothless shot one of the wings, adding another hole to the right one. "No one does that to my sister and gets away with it!" The dragon ignored him and reared up, ready to strike. Hiccup suddenly felt himself unable to move, despite Astrid's shrieks at him to get out of the way.

"**Let the past return. Fly by your own strength until the imposter is removed. The fate of the gods shall be yours to live!**"

The sea-dragon let loose a torrent of flame but just before they hit the paralysed Hiccup, Toothless roared a phrase of his own and fired a small blast of blue flame into Hiccup's face.

"**Keep hold of your origins!**"

Hiccup heard nothing else as the green flames engulfed him and sent him flying off Toothless' back. Astrid shot down on Stormfly to help him but the flames prevented her from getting any closer than she already was. Toothless, without his rider to keep his tail fin in place began falling from the sky when Kyra leapt onto his back and slotted her own foot into the stirrup to bring him back into the air. In the confusion she lost sight of Hiccup who was still getting closer to the waves.

"HICCUP!" Astrid screeched as the teenage Viking vanished under the surface of the water with a splash bigger than anyone thought possible coming from a teenager who weighed barely more than 90 pounds at a rough estimate. The sea-dragon flapped its wings with a mighty thunder-clap and vanished into the clouds whilst Astrid and Kyra, along with Stormfly, Windwalker and Toothless, retreated to land where the entire village gathered along the cliff top waiting for the freckled-faced auburn-haired boy to emerge from the water.

He never did.

Hiccup felt so heavy, despite the fact that he could feel solid ground beneath his feet. Everything was dark and fuzzy â€" he couldn't make out any clear shapes â€" but voices were coming from every direction. One voice, louder and more commanding than the others, silenced the crowd and Hiccup felt ground under his back. Groggily, he blinked so that his vision could clear up a bit but for some reason everything was bathed in a greenish tinge. Hiccup guessed that he'd hit his head or something and was still confused â€" to back this up his head was killing him and he groaned slightly...

Only to freak out as a stream of bubbled erupted from his nose.

Hiccup spluttered and jolted upwards to see a whole manner of sea-life: fishes, sea dragons and the like were all swimming around him although only the dragons seemed to show any interest in this bizarre intruder in their watery world. In his panic, Hiccup completely lost all of the air in his lungs and his chest was burning but when he inhaled to breath, no water seemed to enter his lungs and he was breathing perfectly normally. Clasping his hands to his neck, Hiccup could feel the distinct flaps of skin that formed gills before glancing down and freaking out once again.

His skin had turned a pearly green colour and was covered in scales. He still wore his green tunic but his leggings were gone and, embarrassingly enough, a long tail was poking out. Small wings, more suited to propulsion in the water than for flying, had sprung from Hiccup's back and were the same pearly green as the rest of his body but were thin and translucent, making them look rather spectral. His hands were webbed between the fingers and the gold ring which was his engagement ring pierced through the skin but no hole had been formed

â€" it was as if the ring was a part of him. It was the same for his feet which had elongated into fins of some type and...

Feet?

Hiccup double checked and was stunned speechless when he saw that his left leg no longer sported a prosthetic and was instead a fully functioning limb. Hiccup thrashed around in the water trying to take in everything and his panic levels were through the roof until one sea dragon emerged from the rest.

"**Relax, boy**," it said calmly. Hiccup stopped moving around but was anything but calm. "**Nothing will hurt you. I understand this must be a bit of a shock.**"

"You think?" Hiccup replied sarcastically before he could stop himself. He clutched his throat when he realised that he could talk underwater. "Who are you? Where am I? What am I doing here?"

"**My name is Wavewing**," the dragon replied. Hiccup calmed down enough to take in the beast's appearance. It was more serpentine in looks than most other dragons he'd seen with no wings and short legs looking almost like a dragon out of the Oriental scriptures Trader Johan had once brought to Berk (having obtained them from an old adventurer â€" Hiccup never really heard the full story). He was a deep blue in colour, reminding Hiccup of the sky during twilight hours before it turned completely black, and he had eyes of glowing amber that seemed to invite trust. His face had an aged look to it and his brow was furrowed almost with wisdom. "**I am the Elder of a Weedsnake school here in these waters**."

"Weedsnakes?" Hiccup repeated. That was the first time he'd ever heard of such a dragon.

"**We prefer to keep ourselves to ourselves**," Wavewing explained quickly. "**I highly doubt anyone from the surface would know of our very existence. To answer you other two questions, I will need to know your name.**"

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III," Hiccup replied. Something about the Weedsnake seemed to invite confidence around him. "The people back home call me the Dragon Trainer." A flash of recognition entered Wavewing's amber eyes.

"**Ah, yes,**" he noted. "**The Human who bonded with the Night Fury. The tale is famous among all dragons.**"

"So, why am I here?" Hiccup asked again. "What is this place?"

"**An area of the seas far from your island, I'm afraid**," Wavewing replied sadly. "**Some of the younglings found you drifting through the waters across the Plain of Endless Darkness a few kilometres from here. They brought you to me not four hours ago.**"

"Four hours?!" Hiccup repeated in shock. Surely the village would be worried about him. "I have to get back! My village...my dad...my friends...they'll be worried. We were attacked by this dragon and then..."

"**I know,**" Wavewing interrupted. "**I recognised the Darkwing's

mark as soon as I laid eyes on you.**"

"Darkwing?" Hiccup repeated. "Is that the name of the dragon that attacked Berk? And what do you mean by 'mark?'"

"**Indeed. The High-Diving Darkwing is one of the largest sea-dragons known in these waters**," Wavewing replied. "**It has forced us out of our territory multiple times. Its magic is also one of the strongest in our world â€" as far as I know only a small handful of dragons rival it. It leaves its mark on every victim â€" look at your left hand.**" Hiccup did so and recoiled at the sight of a burn mark singed onto the back of his hand. It bore a striking resemblance to the Darkwing but the design was streaked and the wings weren't in proportion or leathery â€" instead they appeared feathered.

"Is there any way I can get back to being...you know...me?" Hiccup asked anxiously. "Because I have to get back..."

"**As of yet, I'm afraid such a feat is impossible**," Wavewing replied sadly. At Hiccup's crestfallen face, he continued. "**We have only been able to break minor jinxes laid by the Darkwing before. Something of this scale â€" combining a human with a dragon â€" is as of now beyond our abilities.**" Hiccup slowly sank to the sea floor.

"No..." he murmured. "Astrid..." Wavewing swam closer to comfort the teenager.

"**This Astrid...who is she?**" he asked gently.

"She..." Hiccup gulped. He could feel the tears welling up in his throat but he couldn't tell if they were flowing underwater. "She's my fiancÃ©e...my 'mate' as it were. Today was our engagement party. We're supposed to be..." He had to force the next bit out. "...married when we turn sixteen. That's in just over a year and a half now." Wavewing bowed his head sorrowfully.

"**I am so sorry,**" he growled softly in Dragonese. "**I know what it's like to be torn from someone so close to your heart.**" Hiccup knew that dragons mated for life so for one to have its mate taken away from them or to have lost them must be heartbreaking. "**Who else is there?**"

"There's my family," Hiccup replied. "Dad and Kyra... she's my older sister. Also there's the entire village anyway. I have to get back someday or else...they're gonna need to find another heir." Hiccup was surprised at his own words. He'd never really been that interested in being the future Chief of Berk but now that he put his mind to it, the village really needed him to continue his family's legacy. Not to mention Kyra had explicitly mentioned that being Chief was the last thing she wanted and Hiccup dreaded to even think about what would happen if Snotlout took over. That left Astrid who seemed the best option but seeing as she and Hiccup weren't actually married, only hand-fastened, there was a strong chance she'd be out of the question if the village thought Hiccup was dead.

"**Kyra...the name is familiar,**" Wavewing pondered. Hiccup explained that his sister's full name was Valkyra and that she was this generation's Dragon Shifter. "**Ah. Of course â€" the revered Goddess of Dragons in human form,**" the Weedsnake nodded.

"The Darkwing hit her with something too," Hiccup added sadly. He couldn't help but open up to this dragon. "She can't use her powers until..." He scrunched his face up trying to remember. "...'the human she was taken from is returned'," he recited, knowing that it probably wasn't word for word. Suddenly it hit him. "The Darkwing planned it! He knew it was me...he took her powers away and then got me knowing that..."

"**Slow down, Hiccup!**" Wavewing cut in. "**What are you yapping on about?**"

"My sister went missing when she was small," Hiccup spat out quickly. "She was in trouble and was taken to another world and time by some sort of defence mechanism, I think."

"**So you are the one she was taken from**," Wavewing deduced. "**You must have missed her terribly.**"

"Well, it took her twelve years to get back," Hiccup replied sarcastically. "Course I did." _Even more now that I know that I can't get back like this_, he added in his head. Wavewing thought for a few moments before turning to Hiccup.

"**You clearly long for nothing else than to return**," he noted solemnly.

"You'll help?" Hiccup asked hopefully. He wasn't expecting the Weedsnake to say yes.

"**Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, I swear by the Goddess herself that I will do everything in my power to return you to your home**," he promised. "**You shall return some day. Of that I assure you.**" Hiccup was over the moon. "**Until that day, you shall reside here with us. Follow me.**"

Hiccup swam alongside the dragon as he was led to the Weedsnakes' home. Despite knowing that he would have to call this place his 'home' for a while, he knew in his heart that it will never truly be home to him.

* * *

><p>Updates on this story won't be too frequent seeing as I've got exams and I'm still in the process of completing the re-write but with any luck I should get this finished during the school break. Again, sorry the wait's been so long!

3. 3: Three Years Later

Key:

Normal speech

Thoughts/emphasis

Dragonese

Telepathic communication

****Chapter Three: Three Years Later****

CLUNK!

"And that's one more bulls-eye to add to the count," Kyra counted as Astrid's axe impaled another target. "Seriously, Astrid â€" you're gonna be a tough contender to beat for this year's Thawfest."

"Hey, you're not doing to bad yourself," Astrid panted, brushing a stray lock of hair out of her eyes and wiping sweat from her brow. "What's the score so far?"

"Still deadlocked," Kyra shrugged. "That last one of yours just matched my score again."

Three years had passed since the giant sea dragon had attacked Berk and Hiccup had gone missing beneath the waves. Most of the village believed the boy to be dead but a select few still hadn't given up hope that he would one day return. Astrid and Kyra were two of those people â€" Astrid had refused point-blank to call off the engagement and her ring had remained on her finger for three years and Kyra wasn't about to believe that she'd lost the brother she'd been reunited with merely months before he'd gone missing.

The girls had changed quite a bit during the past three years. Both had grown by at least a head and had grown as young women of seventeen. Astrid was looking more like a warrior every day and Kyra looked every part of a chief's daughter ready to take over the village should her brother not return â€" the only problem was that she wanted anything but that.

"At least...at least he can come back knowing this place will be safe with you around," Kyra joked nervously as she and her best friend sat down on a nearby bench. Astrid sighed.

"Do you think he'll ever come back?" she asked.

"You don't anymore?"

"Course I do!" Astrid protested. "It's just...it's been three years, Kyra. How long does he expect us to wait?"

"Astrid, I've tried to contact the sea-dragons, I really have!" Kyra huffed. "You know that ever since that...thing attacked I haven't been able to contact any of the dragons apart from our own." She glanced at a dragon shaped burn mark on her right hand. Since it had appeared, none of her powers had been working â€" she couldn't even fly decently with her glider and had been forced to travel everywhere in the skies on dragon-back. "They're the only voices I hear now. Even the Song of the Adriatic isn't reaching the sea."

Astrid bit her lip. Kyra was almost helpless stripped her powers â€" apparently the only way for her to get them back was for Hiccup to return. It was as if the giant dragon had planned the entire thing...okay, now she was over thinking things.

"He has to come back," Astrid muttered, staring at the sapphire and diamond studded gold band around her finger. "He has to..." The girls sat in silence for a moment before Astrid got up to help the

seamstress, Runa, out for the afternoon. Kyra also headed off back home to help her aging father with chief duties despite her hate for them being greater than that of smoked eel.

Seriously, though, if she had to sort out one more flipping domestic dispute she would find some other way to wreak havoc on the docks without using her Shifter magic.

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Hiccup propelled himself through the murky green water during his gatherings. It was custom for members of the Weedsnake school to collect objects that had sunk to the seafloor but Hiccup bent the rules slightly by only collecting objects that reminded him of home and keeping them in his own collection. The downside was that his exploits had earned him a scolding on multiple occasions so he'd been touching up on his stealth skills over the past three years.

Hiccup looped around a hot water vent to inspect a pile of sand. Brushing it away, Hiccup was mildly surprised to see a familiar axe blade poking out of the sand. It was a double-bladed axe with one blade having a major crack and chip in the metal. It was the axe Hiccup had accidentally chipped when Astrid gave it to him to sharpen before he'd discovered anything about dragons. He'd replaced it at the time but he guessed that Astrid would find out sooner or later. It had been her mother's and the fact that it was now lying at the bottom of the ocean suggested that she had passed away recently, although from what was anyone's guess. Instead of taking it, Hiccup left it in the sand and bowed his head in respect before swimming off to do some more hunting.

Eventually, all Hiccup managed to pick up this time round were a few armlets, some chain mail and what appeared to be part of a ship's bow decoration â€" a dragon head. Stuffing the items into his woven-seaweed satchel, Hiccup swam back to the caves where he'd resided for three years. It was no surprise that the sea around the area was relatively empty â€" most of the Weedsnakes and a few Coralflames (relatives of the Weedsnakes who came and went as they pleased) were elsewhere doing other school traditions â€" so Hiccup slipped inside the caves and began heading for what could be called his room, but was really referred to as a 'nest' in the deeps. Despite his best efforts to head in unnoticed, however, Hiccup was still greeted by a familiar voice.

"**_You took your time. Where've you been all afternoon?_**"

"**_Gathering and swimming. What else?_**" Hiccup replied dryly. Ever since becoming a half-dragon, Hiccup had been able to communicate telepathically with the sea-dragons, much like Kyra could. He was interested to notice how this method was communication only and that his own private thoughts stayed on a different mind-set or mind-stream depending on how you wanted to put it.

"**_Yourself?_**"

"**_Research and trying to keep the younglings under control. What else?_**" Wavewing replied from a few caves down in an equally sarcastic manner. "**_You're not usually out this long._**"

"**_Needed to take my mind off some things,_**" Hiccup excused himself, dumping his satchel on his...bed...type...thing... Well, if you count tossing out of your hand and having the thing slowly float down can be classed as 'dumping'. Bang on cue, Wavewing poked his majestic head through the entrance to Hiccup's room.

"**_You've been doing that a lot recently, Hiccup,_**" he growled softly. "**_What's wrong?_**" Seeing as the dragon was in the room, Hiccup settled for normal speech. He still wasn't able to speak Dragonese, despite everything.

"It's been three years, Wavewing," he sighed, following the stream of bubbles that erupted from his mouth out of sheer boredom. "Aren't you any closer to finding a way to get me out of this?" he asked, gesturing to his scaled, finned and winged self. Only his hair had remained its usual brown and his eyes were as green as they'd ever been. The rest of Hiccup, however, was completely different. He hadn't changed much since first becoming a 'Halfling' as some of the crueller dragons called him, apart from that he'd had a growth spurt, he was slightly more muscular than before (not by much but it was noticable) and was as fast, if not faster, than most dragons and fish in the sea, a fact that he was mildly proud of.

"**_I gave you my word that I would get you home,_**" Wavewing reminded him. "**_If I had discovered something, you would be the first to know._**" Hiccup groaned.

"I just wish that I could at least give them a sign that I'm still alive," he huffed. "Three years is a long time to be missing by my standards."

"**_Would they really believe that someone with your appearance could truly be their lost Heir?_**" Wavewing pointed out as kindly as he could but it still came out sounding harsh. Hiccup's face informed the Weedsnake of this. "**_I apologise. I shouldn't be so brash._**"

"No, it's fine. You're right," Hiccup sighed. Something suddenly sounded in his head and he clutched his temple in shock and pain. The pain soon subsided to be replaced by a warbled sound of some kind. It was faint and unclear but Hiccup could tell it was part of a song of some kind. "Do you guys practise singing down here, by any chance?"

"**_Singing is not a refined Weedsnake art,_**" Wavewing replied simply. "**_Why?_**"

"Nothing," Hiccup frowned. Wavewing hadn't heard it? "I thought I heard something, that's all." He glanced out of the hole in the wall that he called a window and asked to be let alone to sleep. Wavewing nodded his understanding and swam away. As soon as the Weedsnake was gone, Hiccup squeezed through the gap and raced to the surface. He was really breaking the rules with this move â€" none of the school of Weedsnakes was allowed to break the surface of the waves but Hiccup figured that he should get a free pass on this one given that he was only a Halfling. He sprung from the waves into the dazzling sunset and swam over to a nearby rocky outcrop to take in the view.

It wasn't the first time Hiccup had completely broken the rules -

he'd come up to this same outcrop about three months after he'd arrived at the Weedsnake school and had been astonished by how close he actually was to Berk " he could see his home island just on the horizon. Wavewing certainly hadn't been lying when he said that Hiccup had ended up far from home. But given how big the island looked from here, it couldn't have been as far as Wavewing had said. Hiccup had asked about it at the time but Wavewing never really told him why they were closer to Berk than he first thought. It had also been that first time when he found out that his gills had closed up in the open air, allowing him to breathe normally above the waves. _Must be something else sea dragons can do_, he'd assumed.

Hiccup rested his head in his hands for a while. The number of times he'd come up here without telling anyone had been more than he cared to count - the first time it had happened, Wavewing had given him a serious scolding, telling him that someone could have seen him and mistaken him for a fish - maybe even killed him. Since then, Hiccup's Viking stubbornness had taken over and he'd persisted, this time not mentioning his trips above the waves to anyone.

Out of sheer boredom, Hiccup stretched his wings out to have a good look at them " in three years, he hadn't really paid much attention to his newly acquired wings given that they'd really only served as an extra speed booster when he was swimming. Now that he was really paying attention to them, he was able to take in their appearance more.

Over the last three years, the wings had grown in size and were no longer translucent but opaque and looked like they could easily be used for flying as well as swimming, rather a like an albatross or any other type of sea-bird. They were also slightly darker than the rest of Hiccup's scaled body now, no longer being a pearly green but a dark turquoise colour " double checking his hands, feet and tail, Hiccup noticed that the thin skin that webbed his hands and feet and his tail fins were the same colour and thickness. In the dark, murky water of the sea along with the minimal sunlight at the depth they were at, it had been hard for Hiccup to take any real notice of the changes but now it scared Hiccup how much he'd changed. No wonder it would be hard for him to go back to Berk like this.

"I'll be back someday, guys," Hiccup murmured towards Berk. He glanced at his ring, still looped around his finger. "I promise..." Something suddenly sounded in his head again " it was the warbled music again. Shaking his head clear, Hiccup tuned into his telepathic communication mind-set to see if that helped. Miraculously, it did and a familiar song rang through his head.

Far, far away is my pearly Adriatic.

Far, far away...my pretty island home.

The first two lines of the song were all Hiccup needed to hear to know that his sister was still trying to reach the dragons of the sea, despite her loss in power from the Darkwing's attack. He listened for a while until the song ended before trying to send his thoughts back.

"**_I'm here_**_,_" he thought as hard as he could. "**_Don't stop trying " I'll get back somehow._**_" No reply came. Hiccup sighed before ducking beneath the waves again and feeling the gills on his

neck open up to allow him to breathe underwater once more.

"_I'm here. Don't stop trying â€" I'll get back somehow._"

/\

Kyra almost froze when the voice sounded in her head. The voice had been so disconnected and distorted that she couldn't quite figure out who it belonged to but she couldn't shake the feeling that somehow, Hiccup was trying to contact her. But...how could he? Hiccup could only understand Dragonese after she'd given him that scratch three and a half years ago. He'd never been able to communicate telepathically like she could. Either way, she smiled in triumph that she'd finally been able to get some contact to the sea.

"Where are you?" she muttered sadly. "Why won't you come home?"

Hiccup swam back into his room and settled down on his bed. Thoughts were whirring through his head â€" why didn't Wavewing tell him that they were closer to Berk than he thought they were? Why was he only able to hear Kyra's song now after three years? How much longer was he going to have to wait before he could go home?

Home. Hiccup couldn't help but wonder what would have changed since he vanished. The team would all be or coming up to seventeen now â€" if he remembered correctly, only the twins were still sixteen at this moment in time â€" and Kyra would be eighteen. By tradition, she should be married off to another tribe by now â€" like Hiccup and Astrid, she should have been paired with someone by the time she was sixteen â€" but Hiccup guessed that his father was allowing his daughter time to get used to being a Viking and being with her family given how long she'd been away from them. Not to mention she would be the only true heir left if Hiccup never returned.

"How can I miss so much?" Hiccup wondered aloud. Those were three years that he couldn't have back, He'd missed his sister's coming of age birthday...he'd missed everyone's, come to think of it...and he should have been married to Astrid a year ago. To think that he was worried about the Trust Ceremony that day the Darkwing attacked. Now he was worried that it will never take place at all. "What if Astrid...? No," Hiccup shook his head clear of the thought. So what if Astrid found someone else? It was her choice if she did. Still, she said that Hiccup was the only person she wanted to be with, so why would she? Hiccup's thoughts were interrupted when Wavewing poked his head into the underwater room.

"**Hiccup, a word, please***_**" he growled softly. Given that he was speaking in Dragonese Hiccup assumed that this was important so he swam after the Weedsnake as fast as he could through the tunnels and into the main chamber of the caves where the Weedsnakes usually had their meetings. Hiccup was astonished at the amount of Weedsnakes and Coralflames that were in the chamber â€" more than he could count. What were they doing here?

"Wavewing, what's going on?" he asked nervously. "What's with the entire school turnout?"

"**Hiccup, the Weedsnakes and Coralflames offered to help me and they claim to have found a way to get you back**," Wavewing explained.

Hiccup's eyes widened and lit up " he could go home? If that were the case, why did Wavewing sound so worried? "However, they are saying that in order to return you to your original form, we may need to take another step forward."

"Uh...meaning?" Hiccup frowned. What in Valhalla was that supposed to mean?

"Half-transformations are the most difficult to undo," Wavewing explained with worry plastered into his amber gaze. "The others feel that in order to change back to the way you were, your current form needs to be complete."

"So...wait," Hiccup cut in. "I need to be a full dragon in order for this to work? Because I'm not too keen on that idea. In fact, I veto that one!" Wavewing turned to the other Weedsnakes.

"You see?" he roared. "There must be some other way! You know that to turn into a complete dragon he has to completely give in to his instincts! There has to be a way we can simply reverse what has already been done!" Hiccup felt even more worried " give into his instincts? That didn't sound too good.

"What other option is there?" another Weedsnake hissed from the school. "The Halfling has no place in either the Human world or in ours. He has proven himself a relatively useful addition to the school " why? Would you rather lose such a promising dragon, Wavewing?"

"I would rather have him returned home safely than have him lose what he holds closest to his heart!" Wavewing snapped back. "His memories of home are all he has left to keep his hope alive!" It was true. Hiccup's memories of home were the only things that kept him going...that kept him hoping that he will one day return. "But at the same time, I will not have him go back to be ridiculed for his appearance. They wouldn't even know it was him the way he is now."

"Have you forgotten the laws of our school?" another Weedsnake wondered. "The laws that you yourself wrote?"

"I am all too familiar with our laws," Wavewing growled. "But perhaps you have forgotten by which the means Hiccup came here."

"The Darkwing's magic is too powerful to reverse. You know that yourself! Now, do you give us permission to go ahead with this or will we have to do this the hard way?" Hiccup began nervously backing up against the wall of the chamber as the Weedsnakes began cornering him. Wavewing cut in front of them, shielding the boy.

"I will not allow this," he hissed. He turned his great head to face Hiccup "Little One, I would have preferred this to have been different but they leave me with no choice."

"What do you mean?" Hiccup muttered anxiously. Wavewing gave a subtle nod upwards " Hiccup cast his gaze towards the ceiling of the chamber and spotted what he supposed could be called an underground skylight.

"**_Stay hidden,_**" Wavewing ordered. "**_I will find you. But whatever you do, stay away from Berk! I will not have you put in more danger there._**" Hiccup nodded, although he'd already made up his mind. He wasn't exactly one for listening, anyway. That was the one piece of traditional Viking in him that he'd had since he was born.

"Well, it's been nice knowing you all," he recited at top speed. "See ya!" With that, he shot upwards towards the skylight, beating his wings, kicking his legs, waving his tail and pushing through the water with all the strength he could muster to gain as much speed as he could. He swam through the skylight and the Weedsnakes and Coralflames congested the small hole in the struggle to catch him but Hiccup was already headed for the surface of the waves.

He broke through them into the light of the setting sun but nearly fell back into the water â€" he hadn't exactly tested whether his wings could be used for flying but Gobber's teaching method of 'learning on the job' had rubbed off on him. Flapping the darn things furiously, he eventually gained enough height and speed to start gliding and, eventually, fly. He flew to an altitude that was out of the sea-dragons' reach and smirked at them as he hovered for a while in the air above.

"You guys have the experience in the water," he snickered. "Me â€" I'm the one with the extra fins and the wings." He crowed with happiness as he embraced his new freedom and began heading towards the horizon where Berk lay in wait for its heir to come home.

* * *

><p>Sorry it's been a while - exams and revision are taking up a lot of my time right now but I'll try to update whenever I can. Hope you're enjoying the story so far!

EDIT: Thank you to Ferdoos - you're right, it didn't make sense for Hiccup to have not gone above the waves at least once before now. I've made a few changes so hopefully it works a bit better now. Thanks!

4. 4: An Audience with Odin

Key:

Normal speech

Thoughts/emphasis

Dragonese

Telepathic communication

Chapter Four: An Audience with Odin

Hiccup gradually grew weary as he glided over the waves so he had limited time before he had resort to swimming again. By now, the sun was almost below the horizon now and he was well beyond Weedsnake territory so he figured it would be safe enough to go back in the

water for now. Folding his wings, he made a dive for the water and swam towards Thor's Beach. However, he quickly ducked back below the waves when he spotted someone on the sands next to a familiar black dragon " it was Kyra and Windwalker and from this range, Hiccup could tune in easily to their telepathic communication stream (again it wasn't exactly something he was technically allowed to do as a Halfling but he was never one to pay attention to rules).

"**_Do you really think he's still out there?_**" Kyra asked.

"**_You seemed sure that you heard something earlier, Kyra,_**" Windwalker replied. Hiccup was astonished to hear what the Star Backed Night Fury's real voice was like " it had a crystalline, song-like quality to it that reminded Hiccup a lot of Kyra's voice when she sang. He found himself wondering what Toothless' voice really sounded like. "**_You do not doubt yourself, do you?_**"

"**_I can't be sure if it was him, Windwalker " that's the thing,_**" Kyra sighed. "**_Everything was so disjointed._**" Hiccup's heart leapt " Kyra had heard him earlier? He was so tempted to call out to her in his mind now but he restrained himself " she wouldn't believe it was him.

"**_If you believe he will return then he shall,_**" Windwalker reassured. "**_I have never had reason to question your belief before and I have no reason to do so now. He is of your blood and is the closest human companion of my mate._**" _So they made it official,_ Hiccup couldn't help but smile. He ducked further underneath the water when he felt Windwalker's thoughts sharpen.

"**_What is it?_**" Kyra asked urgently. Windwalker sniffed.

"**_I thought I felt something,_**" she replied. "**_There's no need for concern " probably just a Fireworm nearby or something. We should head out " the food stocks need refilling._**" Hiccup heard Kyra sigh in frustration before he saw the familiar shadow of a Night Fury taking flight above his head. Confident that things were now safe, he swam up to the beach and stumbled slightly at the feeling of having solid ground beneath his feet. Thankfully, his tail prevented him from overbalancing too much. He crept into a nearby cave out of sight with a clear view of the beach before settling down " at least no one could see him here. Hiccup had often used this same cave when he was small to hide from his father when he feared a scolding. Now, he was hiding from everyone with no clue how to get back to the way he was three years ago. Desperate, Hiccup cast his eyes to the heavens which were gradually darkening and being dotted with stars.

"Mighty Gods of Asgard...hear me out," he prayed. "For three years I have been trapped in this half-dragon form by a curse I don't know how to lift. I can't go home and restart my life like this but if you can...please help me find a way out of this. Help me get back to the way I was." He paused in his prayer before voicing something he would never usually ask for. "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it. Please...help me get home." As expected, nothing happened so Hiccup settled down to sleep, curling up as he'd grown used to doing lately and bringing his tail up to block the moonlight from his eyes before dozing off.

Hiccup awoke when he felt the presence of another human being. Blinking himself awake, he shrunk further into the cave when he spotted the silhouette of another person outlined in the moonlight outside. His dragon vision kicking in, he could see that the silhouette belonged to a young boy " probably no older than thirteen he guessed. Was he from the village? Hiccup couldn't remember there being a kid old enough to be a teenager now living on Berk " all the kids he knew had been, what, five when he last saw them? Astonishingly, the boy seemed aware of Hiccup's presence despite the fact he'd kept silent.

"It's okay " I know you're in there," the boy called. Hiccup gulped. "You don't need to be scared. I know what's happened to you, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III."

"You know me?" Hiccup mumbled, slowly creeping out from his hiding place. The boy's face was lit up in the pale light of the moon. He certainly didn't look like anyone from the village. His hair was as blonde as the sun at the height of summer and his sky blue eyes sparkled like stars. His skin appeared whiter than the finest silk and there was an otherworldly quality about him. Hiccup wondered if this was a dream or apparition " this was proven false when his bare foot came into contact with a conch shell.

"Okay, I disproved the dream theory..." Hiccup muttered, wincing in pain. "Can someone tell me if I'm dead?" It was a stupid question but then again, Hiccup wasn't often one for smart questions in these situations.

"You're not dead, but I must admit you've given it a fair few shots in your time," the boy chuckled. Okay, now Hiccup was confused " how did this boy know so much? "Well, it is my job to know what's going on in the other realms," the boy shrugged with a mischievous grin creeping onto his face. "It's more than some o the others can say...oh, bother. This again..." he muttered.

Hiccup couldn't help but bow with his face almost plastered to the ground " he'd literally just realised that he was in the presence of a _god_! It had been given away the moment the boy said he watched over the other realms (there were nine in total and the gods of Asgard watched over them all). He just needed to figure out which one it was.

"Oh, stand up straight " skip the formalities already. You never act this way around your sister," the boy groaned

"That's...a little different, Your Godliness," Hiccup stammered. He couldn't be sure which god he was talking to so 'Your Godliness' seemed like the best way to go right now. And it was true " despite Kyra being the human incarnation of the Goddess of Dragons, Hiccup knew her too well to treat her like one. She hated it anyway.

"True," the boy-god admitted. There weren't any fancy flashes of lightning or crackles of thunder surrounding the boy so Hiccup ruled out the possibility of it being Thor. Which was kind of a good thing seeing as Hiccup was still a little wary of lightning after the little stint with the 'lightning-being-somehow-attracted-to-metal-but-no

-one-knew-so-they-blamed-it-on-Toothless-and-to-pr
ove-his-innocence-Hiccup-accidentally-got-himself-hi
t-by-lightning-multiple-times' thing. "Still, you may stand. I face
enough of that small talk in Asgard as it is â€" expect from my sons,
which provides a nice breather once in a while, I'll grant you that."
Okay, judging by that last sentence, Hiccup assumed that he was in
the presence of Odin â€" the King of the Gods himself.

"It is...Odin, right?" he double checked.

"Smart lad!" Odin chuckled. Hiccup suddenly remembered the myths he
was often told when he was a kid â€" apparently Odin's preferred
mortal form was that of a young boy. "I see that's at least one thing
that hasn't changed about you â€" Loki always did admire your wit."
Oh, well, Hiccup took that as a compliment. Still, his face turned
into a sarcastic frown.

"Yeah, about the change thing, I was wondering if you could help me
out a bit," he huffed, extending his wings the best he could,
indicating his tail and gesturing to himself. "Because it would be
really great if that's the reason you're here."

"Well, were it in my power I would have helped you out of this a long
time ago," Odin replied regretfully, his youthful face full of
experience and wisdom that an unknowing passer-by would think odd of
a thirteen year old. Hiccup couldn't believe what he was hearing and
cut across instantly.

"What do you mean by that? You're a god â€" the King of the Gods!" he
protested. "Your powers are supposed to surpass those of any mortal
being who originate in Midgard!"

"Indeed they do, but dragons do not!" Odin roared, changing from a
mild-mannered teenager to a fully grown man with shoulder length hair
and blazing eyes. Hiccup cowered slightly â€" maybe he took it a step
too far. Odin calmed down but remained in his adult form. "I
apologise, but what I say is true. The Goddess of Dragons,
LohikÃ¶rme, is not of Asgard and dragons are not from your realm of
Midgard." _So LohikÃ¶rme was the name of the dragons' Goddess_,
Hiccup thought. 'Kyra' was so much less of a mouthful (easier to
pronounce as well). "She comes from a realm we do not know the name
of and her power is unparalleled. As such, the dragons that reside in
your world have magic beyond our control and, as a result, cast
curses too strong to break by normal means â€" I'm sure you've heard
that it is almost impossible to cheat a dragon's curse." Hiccup
sighed â€" oh, he knew, alright.

"So there's nothing that can be done about it?" he asked. "I'm stuck
like this forever? And Kyra...she'll never get her powers
back?"

"Well, I never said that," Odin pointed out. "I merely said that a
dragon's curse can't be broken by normal means, not that there was no
way to break it at all." Hiccup's face lit up.

"You mean there is a way?" he asked excitedly. Odin's face broke into
a smile.

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, you will be able to cheat this curse
if you complete these three tests," he explained. Hiccup listened

intently. "First: a test of your identity. You must become used to the ways of a human once again â€" that means no use of your dragon abilities whatsoever." Hiccup shrugged â€" that sounded easy enough. "Second: a test of your feelings. Namely, for Astrid." Hiccup's heart sank â€" that could only be bad news if Astrid was involved. For one, she'd probably beat the Valhalla out of him for vanishing off the face of the earth for three years; two, there was the issue that she most likely wouldn't even recognise him; and three...well, this is Astrid, we're talking about. Who knows what else? "She will need to appreciate you for who you are. I'm afraid that will mean you can't tell her, nor anyone else, anything." Well, that was just great. "Third: a test of your heart. Only a strong act decided by heart alone will completely break the curse and return you to your human form. Another thing you must note is that no mortal can aid you in this."

"Right," Hiccup nodded. "Three tests: identity, feelings and heart..." he paused. "Don't the last two count as the same thing?"

"In the informal sense, maybe," Odin shrugged. "In this case, no. Have you ever heard of the 'heart versus head' dilemma?"

"I think everyone has," Hiccup pointed out.

"Well, that's the context we're using here," Odin explained bluntly. Hiccup grimaced â€" he guessed it made sense...kind of. "Oh, and one more thing â€" there will only be one person who can offer you any form of help. I believe she is also in need of yours." Hiccup's emerald eyes lit up again.

"Kyra?" he spluttered. "I can...actually tell her? But you just said that no mortal could help."

"Technically speaking she's not a mortal human being," Odin excused. "You do remember that she is the human incarnation of Lohikäärme, don't you?" Hiccup could swear that Odin was just finding loopholes left, right and centre. Still, it was kind of a good thing as it did mean Hiccup had access to some help.

"Speaking of which, will being able to understand Dragonese count as a 'dragon ability'?" Hiccup asked quickly. "Because Kyra gave that one to me when we were fourteen."

"Okay, you have a fair point on that one," the King of the Gods admitted. Hiccup was already raring to go and darted for the exit of the cave. "Whoa! Hold your dragons there, son!" he chuckled as Hiccup tripped over his tail. "That reminds me..." he noted, whistling. Hiccup snapped his gaze upwards as a flash of blue shone from outside and suddenly he was tackled by a familiar face.

"Toothless!" Hiccup cried with delight as the Night Fury began licking his face. "I cannot say how much I've missed you, bud!"

"**_Well, it's about time you showed your face!_**" Toothless' voice sounded in Hiccup's head. Hiccup hadn't known what to expect about Toothless' real voice but it was a shock to hear it sounding so rich, deep and soft - it sounded as if it would resonate with Windwalker's perfectly.

"Uh, try not to use the telepathic communication too much," Hiccup pointed out. "Part of trying to become me again." Toothless nuzzled his rider in understanding and reverted back to normal Dragonese.

"**Suppose we'd better get started, huh? Looks like we've got a long way to go***_,_**" he growled jokingly, indicating Hiccup's wings.

"Tell me about it," Hiccup groaned. "How do you sleep with these things on your back?" he asked as he mounted his dragon for the first time in what seemed like forever.

"**You mean you still haven't gotten used to it?***"

"You're the one who said to keep a hold of my origins!" Hiccup protested, remembering the final words he'd heard Toothless growl before the green fire of the Darkwing had cursed him into his current form. Odin laughed at the friends' joking around.

"You two count your lucky stars that you have each other!" he chuckled. "And Hiccup â€" good luck, Stoickson." Hiccup glowed with pride at his other last name â€" he had never been called it before and such a name would only be used at formal ceremonies so for Odin to call him by it was a huge honour.

"Don't worry, Odin! I won't let you down!" he grinned, gently nudging Toothless' flanks and flying out of the cave into the moonlit skies, hooting with joy â€" he was back in the air once more, but this time where he belonged.

With his best friend.

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry it's been a while...exams taking up a lot of my time.

Lohikäärme is, as far as I know, Finnish for 'dragon' (using Google Translate here so if there is a mistake, please let me know). I was out of ideas for names so this is what I usually do in this situation.

**About Odin's appearance - apparently a young boy really was his preferred form to take when he visited Midgard (the human realm) so that's where that came from. **

**SoturiOC: Your ideas for the original character are really good - I admire your character creation. I don't know if I'll be able to fit Soturi into How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse given that I know where I want the story to go and it's been going through a re-write from the original (not this one), but I'll see what happens. **

5. 5: Sibling Reunion

Key:

Normal speech

Thoughts/emphasis

****Dragonese****

****_Telepathic communication_****

****Chapter Five: Sibling Reunion****

Kyra and Windwalker hauled in another net of fish â€" at this rate the village wouldn't be going hungry for another week and that included the dragons (guests as well as residents). After receiving the word from her father that one more catch should do the job, Kyra flew back into the skies with Windwalker to hunt one last time before she would turn in for the evening.

"He'd better not put us on hunting duty for another week," Kyra grumbled, not bothering to keep it to herself.

"**_Hey, Snotlout's next on the rota, isn't he?_**" Windwalker pointed out. "**_If we hadn't caught so much today we'd probably starve this winter._**" Kyra snorted â€" her dragon had a point. Snotlout was terrible when it came to hunting so she was half glad that she'd caught so much â€" with any luck it should make up for any likely small catches Snotlout might make. Her attention was suddenly caught as she sensed the presence of one of the other dragons nearby (the Riders of Berk dragons were the only ones she could pick up nowadays). Squinting through the darkness and closing her right eye to make use of her left dragon one, Kyra could just about see the familiar silhouette of Toothless...wait, how was he flying?

"Why would Astrid be flying Toothless at this hour?" Kyra wondered aloud. Toothless didn't let anyone apart from Kyra or Astrid take him out for flights since Hiccup vanished so it made sense for Astrid to be the one flying the Night Fury â€" it just seemed odd for the girl to be out this late seeing as she was always in bed early (first to rise, first to turn in, as Kyra always said). She shrugged it off and headed down to the sea for the last catch of the evening.

Flying back to Berk, Kyra suddenly halted Windwalker in mid-flight. She suddenly sensed something but it wasn't any of the other dragons â€" this was new, something she hadn't felt since her powers were stripped from her three years ago. She cast her gaze to the now moonlit Raven's Point where she could see a faint shadow resting on the cliff gazing out to sea. It looked like a fairly large animal, possibly big enough to feed a family for a few days â€" Kyra smirked. This would be a prize catch and a half.

"Alright, Windwalker," she smirked. "Let's see if this one's up for a chase." She quickly dumped the net of fish back in the village and raced back to Raven's Point, leading her dragon into a dive and snatching the creature from its perch. "HA!" she crowed with delight as the thing shrieked in surprise when they took to the air but her triumph turned to confusion when Windwalker's balance started going all over the place as the creature started struggling and flapping something leathery...

It had wings.

"PUT ME DOWN!" a voice screeched. Kyra's eyes went wide â€" okay, now

it could talk?!

"What in Midgard?" she frowned, leaning over to look over Windwalker's shoulder to have a closer look at her catch " she couldn't see much as the leathery wings prevented her from having a closer look but her attention was caught by a roar from the ground. It was Toothless, without a rider, meaning that Astrid was still back in the village. So, if Astrid hadn't been flying Toothless, who had?

"**_Quit struggling for a bit, would you?_**" Toothless' voice sounded in Kyra's head but she had the feeling he wasn't talking to her. She turned back to look at her catch and screamed in shock, losing control of Windwalker and crashing down towards the ground. Her face was sprayed with leaves and twigs as Windwalker lost her grip on the creature and it clumsily flew a few feet before vanishing " they'd landed near the Cove. Kyra untangled herself from a gorse bush whilst Windwalker righted herself, having crashed headfirst into a fallen tree.

"You saw that too, right?" Kyra panted. Windwalker grunted in reply and shook herself down. Kyra scrambled to her feet and whipped out her silver dagger before racing over to the Cove. At first she couldn't see anything so she clambered down the rock face for closer inspection, closely followed by Windwalker and Toothless. She cast her eyes around frantically, slowly walking around every boulder in the near vicinity and keeping her dagger in front of her at all times.

"Where are you?" she barked. "Show yourself!" she ordered, rounding a boulder by the lake. "Whoever you are you'd better show your face soon or else I swear to Thor, I'm gonna...AH!" she yelped as she bumped into something. She whipped around at full speed, her dagger swinging in front of her and her fist coming into contact with a scaled creature with dark leathery wings and a long tail.

"OW! What the...?" it yelped as Kyra's fist came into contact with its eye. Kyra screamed and ducked for cover in shock " the creature did the same except instead of going behind a rock it dived into the water. Kyra panted heavily " there had been no mistaking that that creature had been some type of dragon. She'd never seen any dragon like it before. It seemed so...human. It had even been standing on its hind legs like a human and Kyra could have sworn it was wearing something similar to a tunic. She calmed herself down and slowly edged around the rock " the creature was nowhere in sight so she guessed it was hiding under the surface of the water. Maybe a gentler approach would work " she tried telepathic communication, although it was a long shot nowadays.

"**_What are you hiding from me?_**" she asked gently. A crackled disjointed voice sounded briefly " she couldn't make out the words. "**_Sorry? I didn't catch that._**" Suddenly something snapped and the interference cleared. The voice was now crystal clear in Kyra's head, something a new voice hadn't been for years, but it was so familiar that Kyra felt spooked.

"**_It's...it's just that...I didn't...want to scare you, that's all_**," it answered. It was a nasal, male voice " Kyra knew she'd heard it somewhere before. There was only one way to confirm her suspicions.

"**_Come out â€" let me see you,_**" she ordered. The voice hesitated in answering.

"**_Uh...you sure you want to see this?_**" it stammered. Toothless suddenly joined the mental conversation.

"**_Oh, for crying out loud! You said she's the only one who can help you so quit with the telepathic stuff and get out already. It's not as if you look any better than usual._**" Did Toothless know this dragon?

"**_Fine!_**" the voice snapped back. "**_But if she impales me, I'm laying the blame on you, bud!_**" Bud? Only Hiccup called Toothless that. Slowly, but surely, something came out of the water and the creature stood in the moonlight in front of Kyra. Now that she'd calmed down, she was able to take in its appearance â€" the creature was covered in pearly green scales from head to toe, although on its head there seemed to be hair that had become even darker than normal due to prolonged exposure to water. On the thing's back were wings almost the same length as a Deadly Nadder's except they didn't have a torn appearance â€" rather they were a dark turquoise and bat-like, a lot like the giant dragon who had attacked three years before. A long tail extended behind the creature with tail fins matching the wings and it seemed to have human like limbs, even hands with webbed fingers. Then there was the face...

The face.

"What have you done to him?" Kyra growled threateningly, clasping her dagger so tightly that her knuckles went white. The creature took a step towards her.

"It's not what you think..." it began, in a voice so familiar that Kyra lost it again. She swung her dagger upwards and began attacking the creature head on.

"WHERE IS HE?!" she shrieked. Had the dragon from three years ago stolen her brother's soul or something and transferred it to one of its own? Was that why this thing looked so much like Hiccup? She was determined to weasel the truth out of the creature. "WHATEVER YOU DID, CHANGE HIM BACK!" she screamed in fury.

"Kyra!" the creature cried out desperately, narrowly avoiding the silver blade of Kyra's dagger. "Kyra, cut it out!" It dodged Kyra's attacks with a clumsy agility that was, once again, too much for Kyra to handle and she prepared for one last assault.

"I don't know who you are or what you've done to my brother," she hissed, pretty sure that her right eye was flashing Night Fury green right now - it was one of the few things she had left, even if it was just an anger indicator. "But, by the gods, if you've hurt him then I'm dragging you to the deepest area of Helhiem I can find and get you to dig further! BRING. HIM. BA...Oomph!" she grunted as the creature grabbed her wrist, snatched the dagger out of her hand, threw it away and tackled her, slamming her against a boulder and clasping a webbed hand over her mouth. She screamed and struggled in its grip but it was stronger than she anticipated.

"Kyra, it's me!" it hissed again. "Just shut up and listen for a

second!" Kyra ceased her struggling and looked into the eyes of the creature " even in the moonlight, she could see the deep emerald-green irises that matched the one in her right eye. In the moonlight, she could see the sincerity and concern almost shining in those eyes. As the thing took its hands away from Kyra's mouth, she struggled to believe what she was seeing. There was no way...the creature had told the truth. There was no mistaking those eyes.

"Hiccup?" Kyra muttered in awe, picking herself up as the dragon-ified Hiccup stepped back a small distance. "What happened to you?" she asked, although she could guess the answer. "I mean, you've..." she struggled to find a word. "...changed," she decided. Hiccup sagged and turned his back.

"Yeah, I'm a half-dragon," he groaned. "And I think you can guess why." So that was what the sea-dragon had done " changed Hiccup into...this.

"Well, course," Kyra shrugged, still in disbelief. "Oh, man...this can't be...I told Dad he'd undercooked that chicken at lunch..." she rambled for a bit.

"Oh, would you stop that?" Hiccup huffed irritably. "Besides, I've been this way for three years now, almost to the day." Kyra frowned.

"So that thing...it really did this to you?" she asked in amazement. Hiccup nodded and lifted his left hand " in the pale moonlight, Kyra could just make out the dragon shaped burn that matched the one of her right hand. "The curse mark!" she exclaimed.

"The Mark of the High Diving Darkwing," Hiccup explained. He sat down near the lake, unable to believe that he was finally making contact with his own kind after so long. "That's what it was " apparently its magic is some of the most powerful in the dragon world."

"Got that right," Kyra grimaced, sitting down beside him. "I've never seen anything like it." She paused. "Why haven't you come to us before now? We've really missed you...Astrid's really missed you," she added. Hiccup's emerald gaze met her own.

"Really?"

"Mmm-hmm," Kyra nodded. "She's not been the same since you left - she's gone back to the whole 'all-work-no-play' regime," she explained with her usual sarcastic tone. Hiccup couldn't help but smile " it was kind of good in a way to know that he'd been missed. It was more than could be said five years ago before he'd become the Dragon Tamer. "So, why haven't you come? I mean, from the sound of things you broke every other rule beofre now. Why not this one?" Hiccup paused before answering.

"I...I guess I was scared," he admitted. "I mean, look at the welcome I got," he added cynically. Kyra flushed in apology. "There's just no way anyone would recognise me like this. Wavewing was worried about me so he never let me wander too far from the school..."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Kyra interrupted. "Who's Wavewing?"

"He's the Elder dragon of a school of Weedsnakes," Hiccup explained. Kyra's frown deepened. "Yeah, I've never heard of them before either. I guess no one's ever seen them 'cos they're not in the Book of Dragons. Anyway, he said he'd try to help me out but he didn't want me coming back because...well, he did seem kinda worried about me â€" heck, he put his own life on the line when the others put forward a suggestion," he grimaced.

"What did they suggest?" Kyra asked. Hiccup quickly explained what had happened to him earlier â€" Kyra was horrified. "A full dragon?! Have they completely lost their minds?!" she spluttered. "Humans are not supposed to be part of these transformations to begin with, let alone be turned into a complete dragon!"

"That's rich coming from you," Hiccup pointed out â€" it earned him nothing except a slap around the head.

"I don't count!" Kyra snapped. "Look, I know how powerful dragon magic can be but those Weedsnakes or whatever they are need to get their heads on straight because it is harder to reverse a full transformation! You know it took me a month to change Fiddlesticks back into a cat after I turned him into a Terrible Terror by accident," she reminded both Hiccup and herself, embarrassingly. Hiccup chortled at the memory.

"Personally, I thought he was more useful as a Terror â€" kept the mice under better control," he joked. Kyra glowered at him.

"Now's the time you choose to tell me â€" could've saved me a month of trying to figure out how to cheat my own magic," she groaned. Hiccup's mind flashed back to Odin's words - it is almost impossible to cheat a dragon's curse â€" and remembered why he was there in the Cove to begin with.

"Oh, that reminds me, I need your help," he grimaced. Kyra nodded. "I...uh...actually got here just before sunset â€" saw you and Windwalker head off hunting â€" and, well, I was going to turn in for the night when..."

"What?"

"You're gonna think I'm crazy..."

"What?"

"I don't know if it really happened..."

"You're stalling."

"I think Odin spoke to me," Hiccup finally spat out. To his surprise, Kyra didn't so much as smirk. "What? You don't think I've lost it?" Kyra shrugged â€" the number of times the gods had randomly pulled her out of her life for a few moments just for a quick catch up had been too high for her to keep track.

"They have a habit of showing up when you least expect it â€" that kid's turned up more times in my life than I care to count," she noted. Hiccup remembered â€" once Kyra had fainted during a meal about two months after she'd returned home. Turns out the gods had pulled her consciousness â€" her spirit â€" out of Midgard so that

she could be introduced as the new incarnation of the Goddess of Dragons to the rest of the gods in Asgard. Since then, she'd tolerated them at most. These moments didn't occur very often but they happened during the most inconvenient times, most of which Kyra really didn't want to mention. That and there had been the occasional appearance of a strange boy every now and then whom Kyra had seemed to recognise â€" having now met Odin, Hiccup could now make the connections.

"Yeah...anyway, he told me that there was a way to fix...this," Hiccup continued, gesturing to himself. Kyra didn't bother going into the running gag. "Don't see why Wavewing didn't come up with it sooner â€" maybe he did, I don't know."

"I get that he didn't want you coming back out of interests to your safety," Kyra recited, frustrated. "What did His Godliness tell you?"

"Okay, I'm gonna sum this up as quickly as I can," Hiccup nodded, taking a deep breath. "Three tests to complete â€" Test of Identity; Test of Feelings; and Test of Heart. Complete them all, I'm me again and you get your powers back," he recited at top speed. Kyra raised an eyebrow. "Look, first off, I need to get used to a human routine again â€" that means no dragon ability usage _including_ telepathic communication; then...Astrid." Kyra grimaced. If Astrid was involved it was going to make things twice as hard if what she thought was coming was coming.

"She doesn't have to fall for you, does she?" she groaned.

"Odin just said she needs to appreciate me for who I am and that I can't tell her anything," Hiccup sighed. _Well, that's a bummer_, Kyra thought. "Third is the most confusing if I'm honest â€" Odin said something about 'only a powerful decision made by the heart alone will break the curse entirely'," he recited. "And before you say it, it's kind of a heart vs. head type of deal," he added quickly, knowing what his sister would say.

"And where do I come into this? Apart from you coming back as a human returning my powers to me," Kyra asked, knowing full well that the curse the Darkwing placed on her would not be lifted until Hiccup was returned to his original form, seeing as the curse had specifically mentioned the 'human' she'd been taken from and that meant the human-Hiccup, not the half-dragon one.

"You're the only one who can help me out with this," Hiccup explained. "Seeing as apparently you're not technically a mortal," he shrugged. Kyra punched his shoulder â€" he was slightly annoyed that she was still as strong as a dragon. "OW!"

"I suppose Odin said that too?" she smirked. Hiccup glared at her.

"Actually he did."

"Oh," Kyra blinked â€" okay, apparently her Queen of Dragons thing meant that she wasn't completely human...oh, well. She'd never been normal to begin with. "Right...well, the first one should be easy enough â€" if we can get you into the village and into a normal Viking routine we should have that done and dusted pretty quickly,"

she noted, already forming a plan. Gobber needed help in the forge/dragon's dentist anyway. "Astrid's gonna be a tough cookie to crumble â€" I mean, it looked hard enough the first time round," she remarked. Hiccup knew how Kyra knew of his first adventures with the dragons â€" in the world she'd been trapped in, his story had been made into something that could be viewed over and over again called a film, which could be viewed on a screen called a television. It had been alien language to Kyra then due to her being part of ancient history and it made no sense to Hiccup now.

"Tell me about it..." he grumbled.

"Third one...no idea," Kyra huffed. "May need to provoke a war or something..."

"And why in Thor's name would we need to do that?" Hiccup spluttered.

"Because you make faster decisions when you're in danger and on an adrenaline high," Kyra shrugged.

"He didn't say it needed to be a fast decision!" Hiccup argued. Gods, if you were judging by personalities alone, you would struggle to believe the two were siblings â€" Kyra was such a thrill seeker! "Just one decided by the heart and not the head!"

"Well, if you can come up with a better idea, then tell me!" Kyra snapped. Hiccup simply glowered at her. "I guess that one's just going to have to happen as it happens," she relented in the end. "I'm sorry Odin had to be so cryptic â€" he's like that sometimes." Hiccup nodded, scratching Toothless' head fondly as the night drew on. "I'd best be getting back to the village â€" Dad's probably wondering where I've gone off to," Kyra sighed, standing up and heading over to Windwalker.

"So when're things gonna start?" Hiccup asked quickly as his sister mounted her dragon.

"Don't know â€" tomorrow earliest if I can help it," she replied. "**And Toothless â€" scat. Dad's expecting you at home as well**," she added in Dragonese. Toothless cooed sadly as he nuzzled his friend one last time for the before allowing Windwalker to help him out of the Cove. "Oh, and one more thing â€" how in Niflheim do you cope with all that chief stuff?" Kyra groaned. "It's driving my head in!" Hiccup shrugged â€" in all honesty, he had no idea himself.

"Just quickly â€" they made it official?" he asked, indicating Windwalker and Toothless, both of whom cooed embarrassingly â€" if dragons could blush, both Night Furies would be bright red right now. "I take it that's my answer."

"They've been waiting for you to get back," Kyra grinned. "Didn't want to start a family without the best friend around," she added. Hiccup couldn't help but feel glad that his best friend would put off having a family of his own to wait for his return. It was a good thing for him that Windwalker was so patient. "Who knows what'll happen this Snoggletog?" Kyra shrugged before heading off into the forest. Hiccup made himself comfortable gazing up at the stars and smiled as he welcomed sleep, happier than he'd been for three

years.

He was home.

6. 6: The Halfling

Chapter Six: The Halfling

Kyra could hardly sleep that night â€" she was too excited about her brother coming home at last. Heck, she hadn't felt this excited since finding out that the world she'd loved through fiction for so long was actually real!

"**_Wonder what made him finally disobey orders to stay away from here,_**" she thought towards Windwalker who, like her rider, was still awake.

"**_Who can say?_**" the Star Backed Night Fury replied sleepily. "**_I'm sure Hiccup will tell us in good time._**" Kyra smiled â€" that was if her brother decided to tell her anything. Knowing Hiccup, he wasn't one to give away personal information unless he was pushed. "**_You know what he said about him not being about to tell the others anything?_**"

"**_Yeah â€" why?_**"

"**_Do you think you'll be able to say anything?_**" Windwalker asked. Kyra thought for a moment.

"**_Doubt it. If he's supposed to keep his identity a secret for now, I'd ruin it by telling the others,_**" she replied. "**_It sounds to me as if the second test Hiccup mentioned is more about Astrid figuring out who he is..._**"

"**_And knowing Vikings, their observational skills aren't the best in the world,_**" Toothless cut in jokingly from the other side of the room.

"**_My point exactly. Although with any luck Astrid will catch on okay â€" she's more observant than the others,_**" Kyra pointed out.

"**_You think? With Hiccup looking the way he is, Astrid's suspicions are gonna be through the roof!_**" Toothless protested. "**_We did tell you about the incident with Heather, right?_**"

"**_Yes â€" Astrid grew so suspicious that she wouldn't listen to Heather even when she was telling the truth behind her actions,_**" Kyra huffed. "**_You told me about it just before I first met her._**" Well, that pretty much dashed any hopes of Astrid catching on quickly.

"**_Now get to sleep â€" if your plan is going to work, we've got a big day ahead of us tomorrow,_**" Windwalker instructed gently. Kyra cast her dragon a cynical glare, a smirk creeping onto her face.

"**_Fine, Mum,_**" Kyra joked â€" Windwalker and Toothless both chuckled in their own way. Windwalker had become increasingly more

motherly towards Kyra since she'd officially become Toothless' mate and she really wanted to start a family but she'd respected Toothless' wish to wait for Hiccup, knowing that the boy would be over the moon to be there with his friend every step of the way, especially seeing as he was supposed to be getting ready for family life himself.

Kyra eventually closed her eyes and let sleep take over her. If there was one thing she still had from her dragon side, it was her insta-sleep ability.

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Kyra woke up as the cockerel crowed at sunrise. She let Windwalker out for a morning flight and promised to get Toothless going once she'd had breakfast â€" skipping most of the stairs, she helped herself to some porridge from the stove and nodded in greeting at her father, who had been up since before the sun.

"Mornin', Dad," she mumbled with her mouth full. "Busy day ahe'?" Stoick glanced up and chuckled lightly.

"What did I say about a chief-tess and her food?" he smiled. Kyra rolled her eyes and swallowed.

"To not talk with her mouth full," she groaned. "Dad, do we really know if I'm going to be running a village at all, even if Hiccup gets back?" _Which he has_, she added to herself.

"Well, you know there's the matter of your marriage," Stoick reminded his daughter. Kyra groaned again and slumped down on the nearest chair. "Don't give me that â€" we've already put it off for two years to..."

"I know, I know!" Kyra huffed. "To allow me time at home after being away for so long." In truth, Kyra was grateful that her engagement had been put off â€" she wouldn't have had time to enjoy her home if they had. Heck, in all respects, she should have been married off the year after she got back! "But how do we know I'm going to get married, if I do at all, to a chief?" she asked.

"Well, I've been talking to the Meathead clan," Stoick noted. Kyra heaved a sigh of relief â€" at least it wasn't Dagur the Deranged from the Berserkers or Norbert the Nutjob from the Hysterics. She would have committed suicide if it had been. "And Mugdug and I were thinking of you and Artair meeting up sometime today. You know, to see if you get along." Kyra sat up.

"Wait, you're considering my choices?" she blinked.

"Of course!" Stoick chuckled. "Don't want my daughter to be miserable for the rest of her life." Kyra beamed from ear to ear â€" at least she had some choice in the matter. "How come you're up so early, anyway?" he asked. "You normally sleep in after a full day of hunting." Kyra winced â€" dang, her father knew her too well.

"Uh...well..." she stammered. "I thought I could...give Toothless a longer flight than normal...and, umm...also do some more hunting?" she shrugged. "Cos...you know how pathetic Snotlout is when it comes

to hunting," she added nervously. Amazingly, Stoick bought it despite his daughter's acting abilities being almost as bad as Hiccup's.

"Fair do's," he commented. Toothless jumped up and down on the floor above to show his want to get moving. "Alright â€" you'd best finish your breakfast before that dragon of Hiccup's breaks the floor again."

"On i'," Kyra mumbled, shoving down the last of her porridge and dashing back upstairs.

"Swallow!"

"Whatever!" Kyra shouted back down at her father as she took to the skies on Toothless. Once in the air, Toothless began speaking mentally to Kyra.

"**_So, what's the plan for today, then?_**"

"**_Step One: Get Hiccup to the village_**," Kyra replied. "**_Step Two: Persuade Gobber that he needs a new apprentice to help out in the forge_**."

"**_Which he does._**"

"**_Exactly. Step Three: Wing it,_**" Kyra sighed. She had no clue as to what to do after Hiccup was in the village and taking part in everyday life â€" at least they could get the first 'test' out of the way. As she said before, Astrid would be a tough one and there was no telling how they were supposed to get the last one done. Kyra snapped out of her thoughts when she spotted a familiar pink and yellow Monstrous Nightmare and smiled â€" if Newtsbreath was in the area, there was only one other person who could be as well.

"Kyra!" Heather called, flying over.

"Hey, Heather!" Kyra called back, waving and slowing Toothless down so that the girl could catch up. "What brings you here?"

"Errands," came the answer. Heather, unlike Kyra and Astrid, had been married the previous year to Magnus the Fearless of the Meathead tribe and it was fair to say that married life wasn't exactly suiting her taste for adventure so she offered to do 'errands' whenever she could, if only to visit Berk every once in a while. "Magnus asked if I could talk to the chief about dragon issues."

"I thought Dad told Mugdug that we'd get round to it once Devastating Winter's passed," Kyra frowned.

"Well, you know Magnus â€" he thinks he could run the place if he could," Heather shrugged. Kyra had only met Magnus once when the treaty between the Meatheads and Hooligans was being renewed and he was pretty much a slightly more tolerable version of Snotlout, without the ego and obnoxiousness. "How are things?"

"Let's head down â€" I've got things to do anyway," Kyra suggested, leading Toothless back to terra firma. Once on the ground, she turned back to face Heather. "Sorry, what were you saying?"

"Any sign of him yet?" Heather asked as she always did on her visits to Berk, her pale green eyes filled with a mixture of hope and worry. Kyra had to pretend that nothing had happened and turned her gaze away. "Still?"

"I haven't been able to contact any dragons apart from our own â€" you know that," Kyra sighed. "I can't pinpoint where he is because of that â€" not to mention I can't go looking for him myself."

"Because you can't transform anymore either," Heather remembered.

"That and I can't just leave the village," Kyra added sadly. "Besides, Dad's been trying to find me a husband for almost a year now â€" I might as well humour him." Heather couldn't help but snort.

"Well, I'm gonna go catch up with the others," she noted. "I'll see you later, 'kay?" She waved goodbye and headed off into the village, with a basket of something that Kyra had somehow managed to not notice until then. Still, Kyra mentioned for Toothless to come with her and headed into the forest where she had to suddenly freeze in her tracks as a double-bladed axe barely missed her nose.

"ODIN'S GHOST!" she yelped before recognising the axe. "Astrid!" The Nordic Blonde emerged from the trees looking pleased with herself.

"What? You have to admit that was a good shot," she smirked.

"Yeah, but you could've given me advanced warning!" Kyra snapped.

"Learnt from the best," Astrid shrugged, pulling the axe out of the tree. Kyra grumbled â€" okay, so she'd given Astrid a few pointers on being light on her feet, quiet and sneaky but that gave the girl no excuse to go practising her new skills on her!

"What're you doing here?" Kyra asked instead, keeping her temper under control.

"Practising," Astrid replied bluntly. "What're you doing here?"

"Walking," Kyra replied in equal bluntness. "Shouldn't you be over at Runa's by now?" Astrid slumped.

"You had to remind me!" she groaned. "Can't I take a day off?"

"Not if I tell her you've been skiving for the past week and a half!" Kyra warned. "What would you do if Hiccup came home and all you had to give him as a welcome present was a poorly made house rug?" Astrid visibly bristled.

"I'll tell him not to worry me sick for three years â€" that's what I'll do," she growled softly. Kyra winced â€" she needed to get Astrid out of the woods.

"Even so, I really don't think he'll appreciate being slapped in the face again," she huffed. "Now would you scat, already? Because I'm

not in the mood for arguing." Astrid still stood her ground so Kyra opted for her last resort technique which, thankfully, still worked â€" she crouched as if to attack and growled. That was enough to send even the toughest Vikings panicking, including Astrid even if they knew that Kyra couldn't transform due to her curse. Astrid mumbled a quick apology and scarpered off back to the village whilst Kyra heaved a sigh of relief â€" that was too close.

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Kyra eventually reached the cove to see Hiccup already lying awake waiting. She grimaced a quick apology and jumped down, skipping the climb down as she usually did.

"You're getting slower â€" what took you so long?" Hiccup asked, kicking his tail back as it came creeping forward with a mind of its own.

"Got held up," Kyra replied. "Toothless wanted a flight this morning, plus Heather's paying a visit and I bumped into Astrid five seconds ago," she added. Hiccup winced â€" it hurt to know that he couldn't tell Astrid of his situation. "Anyway, I've got things planned out for your identity test or whatever it was."

"So what's the master plan?" Hiccup asked, folding his arms â€" Kyra was still creeped out by his webbed hands and feet. She needed to dig out a pair of his boots and fast. Ignoring them for now, she jogged over and explained what she had in store.

"But first you need a cover up," she added. "I can hardly go around saying that you're...you...if you need to keep this whole thing a secret in order to become...you...again." Hiccup groaned â€" always with the alibis with Kyra. It had happened the last time and he was hoping never to have to do it again â€" he sucked at lying at the best of times and his acting skills were worse than Astrid's, which was saying something. "I mean, Snotlout and the twins might not notice â€" their intelligence levels are worse than a sheep's, after all." Hiccup snorted â€" that was true if anything. "But Dad, Gobber, Astrid and Fishlegs are going to notice something. Also Heather - she just got here."

"Wouldn't Fishlegs be too excited at the prospect of discovering a new dragon?" Hiccup pointed out half jokingly.

"Still â€" Astrid and Heather are going to spot the similarities as will Fishlegs when he calms down," Kyra grimaced. "You know how smart they are. Not to mention Gobber knows you better than most of the grownups around here and Dad isn't exactly _not_ going to notice that you look like his 'long-lost son'."

"Uh...I come from a race of dragons that share a human counterpart with nearby tribes?" Hiccup suggested off the top of his head. Kyra thought for a second.

"Suppose that'll work," she shrugged. "Plus it'll explain why you act and look like 'my missing brother'," she added using quote marks. Hiccup was surprised with his own creativity â€" normally his cover ups were so see through and pathetic even Clueless, a Viking from the Meathead Tribe, could see through them. "I guess you could have run away from the group...school?" Hiccup nodded. "And that's why you've

suddenly ended up here on Berk. Still, this whole thing would be so much easier if you'd sprouted horns or something," Kyra nodded her satisfaction, mumbling the last part (earning an "As if I wasn't in bad enough shape!" from her brother) and dragged Hiccup to the top of the Cove, although after a few minutes trying to squeeze his wings through the tiny gap Hiccup had to give in and briefly fly up to the top. Before they set off, however, she turned to face Hiccup one more time.

"Also â€" Dad impersonation. Requirement."

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"DAD!"

Stoick had just emerged from the house when he heard his daughter shout. The call came from the direction of the forest and, sure enough, Kyra came pelting out of the trees dragging behind her the most bizarre creature Stoick had ever seen â€" it was clearly a dragon of some kind but at the same time it looked incredibly human. Gobber walked over, closely followed by the Riders of Berk and Heather who had just been getting ready to head home.

"What in Odin's name is that with her?" Gobber wondered, staring in awe at the creature Kyra had with her. Kyra skidded to a halt just in front of everyone and panted (Hiccup rolled his eyes next to her. Even without her magic, Kyra still had the strength and stamina of a dragon and was never out of breath. Period).

"You would not believe what I found!" Kyra panted.

"I assume _that_," Tuffnut supposed, indicating the dragon-like thing next to her. His answer was a punch in the face from his sister.

"Where did you find it?" Stoick asked as patiently as he could without sounding rude. Even so, the creature seemed to take offence for being called 'it' and scowled slightly. Astrid pushed herself forward and froze when she saw the thing â€" the wings were a similar colour and texture of the sea dragon that attacked three years ago and the tail was similar as well. In addition to this, the dragon's face was almost identical to Hiccup's â€" true it was older and more defined but there were definitely similarities. Why was that? The thing's build was slightly different to Hiccup's â€" it was slightly stronger and not as lanky as the wayward Viking's had been â€" but Astrid still couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu around it. She glanced at Stoick and Gobber â€" the look of recognition and suspicion was written all over their faces as well. They'd seen it too.

"I'm not an 'it'! I've got a name!" the creature huffed in an accent that sounded slightly Scottish...kind of. "And, Ma'am, you're cutting off my blood circulation..." it added, glaring at Kyra who let go of the things wrist.

"Sorry," she mumbled. She turned to her father. "I found him in the Cove â€" I don't know how he got there. He just...was."

"It's possible he could have flown in under the cover of night," Fishlegs suggested (as Hiccup suspected, he was too excited at the

prospect of seeing as new dragon to notice the similarities). "I mean â€" those wings would be perfect for night-time flying."

"What is it, anyway?" Snotlout asked â€" Kyra punched him in the face for calling the creature an 'it'. The creature huffed.

"Look, if it makes things easier and less offensive for me, I'm what's known in the dragon world as a Halfling," he groaned. "We're sea dragons and there's one school for every human tribe in the Archipelago â€" we share human counterparts on land, hence the name seeing as other dragons don't tend to see us as complete dragons."

"Is that how you can speak Norse, then?" Fishlegs asked eagerly. The Halfling nodded. "Awesome! This is a first for dragons! It's just like discovering the Typhoomerang all over again...OWW!" he yelped as Astrid elbowed him in the stomach. She faced the Halfling with a glare set deep in her storm blue gaze.

"So, what's your name then?" she asked formally, although the hate in her voice was as clear as crystal.

"Uh...it's...Draco," he replied. "Latin for 'dragon' â€" my parents weren't exactly an imaginative bunch." Astrid's glare deepened â€" Draco cowered slightly.

"What do you know of a sea dragon that attacked our village three years ago?" she interrogated.

"Astrid!" Heather snapped. Draco gulped.

"Um...well, I saw it happen..." he replied nervously. "My counterpart went under the waves, if I remember right."

"Do you know where he is?" Astrid cut across. Draco stayed silent. "I said, _do you know where he is_?"

"Astrid, enough," Stoick interrupted. He turned to face Draco â€" he agreed that the dragon looked familiar to his son, looking past the minor differences. He could understand Astrid's behaviour but as chief he had to keep things from boiling over. "I apologise, Draco. But what brings you here to Berk?" he asked. Astrid knew he was trying to be neutral but she could detect the tone in his voice that screamed uncertainty. Something about the dragon and his story didn't sit well with her.

"Well, I wasn't exactly ever accepted in the school," Draco replied. "So I ran away, found a cave and it led me to...the Cove, did she call it?" he briefly asked. Kyra nodded. "I didn't know it would lead me there â€" I was just gonna stay until morning when _she..._" he shot at Kyra who flushed furiously. "...woke me up and dragged me here," he finished.

"So you ran away, huh?" Heather repeated. Her eyes had also narrowed slightly â€" she'd spotted it too. "It must've been pretty bad." Draco nodded in agreement. "You got anywhere else to go?"

"To be fair, I didn't have anything planned," Draco shrugged. "I was just gonna go wherever and see if I could be of any use elsewhere." Kyra's face suddenly lit up.

"Well, then â€" you could stay here!" she exclaimed. "Gobber here's been needing a new apprentice in the forge for ages..." Gobber made to protest. "Don't give me that, Gobber â€" you know you do. Weapons production has been slacking for the past month and a half and the arrows I ordered two months ago still haven't been done."

"Alright, you got a point on that one," Gobber huffed. Astrid frowned at Kyra â€" why was she so accepting of this new dragon? She supposed it made sense for her, being the Dragon Shifter and everything, but still â€" Draco bore such a resemblance to the dragon from three years ago as well as Hiccup that it was scary. "Lad â€" you good to start right away?"

"Uh...sure, if I can help," Draco shrugged, a grin creeping across his face. Stoick smiled his acknowledgement and sent Draco and Gobber on their way before turning to his daughter.

"A species of dragon that speaks Norse and resembles a human," he commented. "Remarkable."

"I didn't even know they existed," Kyra smiled back.

"This will be an amazing addition to the Book of Dragons!" Fishlegs gushed. "We have to ask him a few questions during Training one day."

"Is he just a new project for you to study?" Ruffnut groaned. "Have you even considered his feelings? I wouldn't like it."

"I'd ask him first!" Fishlegs protested.

"Quite frankly, I think a new name is in order," Snotlout cut in egoistically. "And I'm the one who'll decide it."

"Well, this should be interesting," Tuffnut snorted sarcastically. Astrid stood apart from the group.

"I don't know, guys," she frowned. "Haven't you noticed? His wings are almost exactly the same as that dragon which attacked us when Hiccup vanished!"

"You're right," Heather agreed. "I noticed it too." She frowned. "And did you see his face?"

"Yeah," Astrid nodded. "It's a lot like his," she paused. "What if that dragon did something that meant Hiccup really is gone? Can we really trust him?"

"You're saying Draco's an intimidation?" Kyra smirked, a little too quickly for Astrid's liking. "Astrid, he just explained that his school has counterparts to our tribe!"

"Could be a cover up!" Astrid argued. "Either way, you guys shouldn't just accept someone right off the bat! We know what happened the first time that happened." Heather cringed next to her, wincing at the memory.

"Astrid," Stoick cut across. "I know what you mean. Something about that dragon doesn't fit." Kyra bit her lip but Astrid looked slightly

triumphant. "I will keep an eye on him. If I suspect anything about him, he will answer to me and you will be the first to know if he is hiding anything about Hiccup's fate." Astrid couldn't help but feel slightly better that the Chief was siding with her, if subtly. "Until then, I want you kids to find out more about him â€" Kyra, see if he is connected to that dragon. Fishlegs â€" find out everything you can about his species. Twins, Snotlout â€" make sure he doesn't cause any trouble for the village. Astrid â€" keep an eye on him."

With that, Stoick left to continue his chief duties along with Kyra, Windwalker and Thornado, whilst Heather took off on Newtsbreath to head back home and the rest of the Riders of Berk headed out to carry on with their lives now that this strange Halfling had entered it.

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry if things have been a little confusing â€" many thanks to Ferdoos for pointing out some plot holes which I overlooked. Hopefully things have been explained a little better in this chapter *crosses fingers* but if there is still anything left unclear, please let me know in either the reviews or send me a PM. I'm always looking to improve so any advice or notes will be great. No flames though â€" they don't help in the slightest.

7. 7: A State of Affairs

Chapter Seven: A State of Affairs

Hiccup heaved a sigh of relief â€" dang, Astrid was way too smart. She could see past every lie and cover up â€" it was a talent that had served her well in the past and if she suspected someone of lying or being suspicious she stuck by that feeling, even if no one else believed her. He had seen the looks of doubt that had crossed her face as well as his Dad's Heather's and Gobber's. As suspected, Fishlegs had been too excited at the prospect of discovering a new dragon to take too much notice at the time but there was no doubt he'd pick up on things later. Hiccup knew it wasn't going to be easy but he hadn't expected it to be that hard.

"Why, Odin, did you have to make it so that I can't tell anyone?" he muttered under his breath. Honestly, the gods made no sense sometimes.

He jogged behind Gobber obediently as the man led him to the forge â€" Hiccup recoiled slightly from the heat when he entered but at the same time, it was a nice feeling to know what this place was like again. Three years away from his second favourite place of Berk (the favourite being the Cove) was too long.

"Alright," Gobber huffed. "There're swords that need sharpening and a few axes that need rebalancing. Oh, and also those arrowheads that Kyra wanted done. Get to it." Hiccup feigned surprise.

"Wait, you mean just figure it out by myself?" he spluttered.

"Either learn on the job or go elsewhere," Gobber replied sharply, leaving Hiccup to his own devices. Smiling in mild amusement, Hiccup slung the old apron over his

now-patched-up-multiple-times-with-seaweed tunic and set to work sharpening blades. Within minutes he felt himself getting back into the swing of things â€" he felt as if he belonged in the forge; as if it had been waiting for his return. Kyra soon came in to see how he was getting along.

"How're things?" she asked, leaning against the workbench.

"Doing okay," Hiccup replied, finishing the third sword and quickly testing it on a nearby log of wood â€" the blade cut clean through.

"Nice going on the cover up, by the way," Kyra congratulated in an undertone quickly, making sure no one was looking. "But...seriously, 'Draco'?"

"You try thinking up of a name when you're put on the spot," Hiccup hissed, making a start on the next sword. "First thing I thought of, alright?" Kyra shrugged in reply.

"I was just talking to Fishlegs, by the way," she grimaced. "He spotted it too â€" he wants to know why this new dragon looks like Hiccup. Why couldn't you have sprouted horns or something?" she groaned for the second time that morning. "It would have made the whole 'they're-not-supposed-to-know-exactly-who-you-are' thing so much easier." Hiccup was about to retaliate when Astrid entered carrying her double-bladed axe.

"Oh, hi, As...uh, Ma'am," he stammered. "Can I...help?" Astrid shoved her axe in his face.

"This needs sharpening," she replied bluntly. Hiccup cautiously took the axe and brought it over to the grinding wheel. "Be careful â€" my fiancÃ© made that for me."

"Okay, one razor-sharp axe coming right up," Hiccup nodded, recognising the axe â€" it was indeed one that he'd made for Astrid. It had been the one he'd made as a birthday present shortly after the Battle with the Red Death. Astrid was about to turn away when she froze â€" she'd heard Hiccup say those exact same words once before when she'd taken he mother's axe here for him to sharpen and that had been before Hiccup had trained Toothless. She turned back.

"What did you say?" she asked. Hiccup winced â€" oops. Kyra bit her lip and looked away.

"Uh...that I would get to sharpening your axe right now," he replied. "Why?" Astrid's glare had gone â€" now just plain curiosity filled her face.

"Nothing," she replied. "Just that...my fiancÃ© once said that." She sighed. "You said dragons like you had human counterparts?"

"Uh-huh," Hiccup nodded, finishing one blade and moving onto the next. "Your fiancÃ© was mine, I guess â€" that's why we're so similar." He couldn't help but sigh and take a brief glance at his fiancÃ©e â€" to his relief and joy, the diamond and sapphire studded ring was still on her finger.

"Yeah," Astrid sighed, turning away but not before she spotted a band of gold on Hiccup's finger. She hadn't noticed it before. "Hey â€" where'd you get that?" she asked. Hiccup winced.

"Uh...it's nothing. Some hatchlings get given a dragon-gold ring when they're born," he excused himself, hiding his left hand from view grateful that without seeing the dragon etching inside, his wedding ring just looked like a plain band of gold. He was just thankful she hadn't seen the mark â€" that might have given the game away. Astrid made a face. "The skin grows over it after a time..." he muttered. Astrid still didn't look as if she was buying it but she didn't make any notion to get anything else out of him. Kyra cast a sideways glance at Hiccup to say '_too close!_' when her father called from nearby. Hiccup didn't quite make out what he said afterwards over the screech of metal being sharpened but Kyra certainly did as her face lit up.

"Got to go," she said quickly. "I've got a meeting to attend."

"Meeting with who?" Hiccup frowned, glancing up from his work briefly. Kyra quickly fished a comb out of her belt pouch (similar to Astrid's) and neatened her dark auburn locks so that they tumbled over her shoulders gracefully rather than the tangled mess they normally were. Okay, odd â€" Kyra didn't usually pay much attention to her appearance.

"Let's just say Astrid's not the only one facing relationship issues," Kyra shrugged slyly, jogging away. It didn't sink in for a while but as soon as Kyra was gone, Hiccup realised what she said.

"Wait..._WHAT?!_" he yelped, barely holding onto the axe as it threatened to fly out of his hand in shock.

"What?" Astrid glared, snapping her gaze back into the forge so quickly her hand shot up to her neck moments later.

"Nothing!" Hiccup called. By the gods, Kyra had _so much_ to answer for later! He gently ran his finger along the blades of the axe and swung it at the test log â€" the piece of wood split clean in two so Hiccup was more than satisfied. He handed it back over to Astrid who fished some coins out of her purse to give to the boy â€" Hiccup stuffed them into the money jar on the side before moving onto fashioning some arrowheads â€" Kyra had left some custom designs Hiccup had made for her for her sixteenth seeing as she was one of the few Vikings on Berk who used a legitimate bow and arrow (the other being Hiccup) with many opting for the crossbow.

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"You done this before, lad?" Gobber suddenly asked. Draco was so startled he had to melt the arrowhead he was working on and start again.

"Uh..." Draco struggled briefly to come up with an answer. "Well, kinda â€" except the forges underwater use hot water vents, not fire," he explained quickly. "If you ask me we might as well get a Scauldron to melt everything down there, the water's so hot from those things," he added, tossing another arrowhead into a nearby

basket to make into arrows later.

"You see many sea dragons where you come from?" Gobber asked, hammering a scythe into shape. It was strange how much the dragon resembled his old apprentice â€" if anything was to go by, his old conversation tactics might get something out of the dragon about who he was. Like Astrid and Stoick, there was something that didn't sit right with Gobber about this Halfling.

"Not too many â€" we're normally seen as outcasts in the dragon world," Draco excused quickly. (_Dang, Loki must really be on my side today_, Hiccup thought, impressed at his own suddenly found ability to actually lie and make it sound plausible). "What with the human-counterparts thing and all. Other dragons tend to leave us alone â€" it's like they don't even know we exist."

"How come's you ran away, anyhow?" Gobber quizzed. "You said you were never really accepted â€" what did they do?"

"Well, I was more human-like than the rest of them to begin with," Draco replied. "Unlike most, I could speak Norse and my mindset was always more like a human's â€" might have had something to do with my counterpart or something. The legend of the Dragon Tamer is famous even to us," he added proudly before sighing. "I thought that would make them accept me â€" if my counterpart could do something like that, maybe they would think I could."

"And they never did," Gobber frowned.

"The elders always had this idea that dragons and humans should remain separate worlds," Draco explained. "The legends of the Dragon Tamer are more of parables â€" they used the attack from the Darkwing three years ago as an example of what would happen if the worlds merged." (_Okay, Loki, I am now in your debt_, Hiccup thanked in his mind. His cover-ups were coming far more easily now).

"Darkwing? Is that what it was?" Gobber noted. Draco nodded and added that its full name was the High Diving Darkwing. "Suited it. Never seen a dragon like it in all my years and trust me I've had more than I care to think about." Draco sighed. "So what was life like down there?"

"Uh...dark, murky and wet," Draco replied cynically. Gobber couldn't help but chuckle â€" if what the Halfling dragon said was true and it was the counterpart of Hiccup, then its behaviour certainly backed that up.

"Nice one, lad," he remarked. "But seriously..."

"What do you wanna know?" Draco groaned, chucking another arrowhead into the basket.

"Oh, I don't know," Gobber shrugged. "Just that it would be nice to get to know ya. We may not have ever seen anything like you before â€" and we've seen some pretty strange stuff â€" but even we don't want to make your stay uncomfortable. We're reasonable Vikings." Draco cast Gobber a cynical glare.

"Yeah, speaking of 'uncomfortable', I'd like a new conversation, please," he groaned. Gobber smirked â€" he already knew how to stick

with the subject on hand yet change the conversation. It had happened with Hiccup many times.

"Okay," he snickered. "How'd it go with the ladies?" Draco spluttered and nearly dropped an arrowhead. He abandoned the arrowheads, happy that he'd made enough, and went to fashion some shafts.

"Way to get the mood back on track," he huffed.

"Come on," Gobber chuckled. "I saw how you were looking at Astrid â€" she reminds you of someone back where you're from, doesn't she?"

"Oh, please," Draco moaned. "None of the girls back there would come near me with a ten foot piece of driftwood even if they were stung by a Venomous Vorpent and I had the only potato in the entire ocean."

"The lass still reminds you of someone, though." _Dammit, why does he have to be so persistent?_

"Okay, she does!" Draco admitted. "But like I said â€" no one would even think of being my mate, okay? Just leave it at that." He sanded down an arrow shaft and attached a few eagle feather fletchings to it before moving onto the next. Gobber finally decided to properly change the topic to the original one.

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"Got to say, lad â€" you're almost as good as my old apprentice, if not _as_ good," he remarked. Hiccup hid a smirk of pride â€" it was nice to hear some praise from his mentor even if it wasn't directly straight at him, rather at his alias. "And Astrid's axe earlier â€" that was some pretty fine work."

"Oh, it was nothing," Hiccup shrugged. "Just...a thorough sharpening, that's all."

"And thorough it was as well â€" that blade went clean through that oak log," Gobber noted. Hiccup's eyes widened in surprise â€" that had been oak? Oak was the hardest wood on Berk and it took an extremely sharp blade to cut through a log with the same thickness as a Viking's arm. Unintentionally, Hiccup's mind cast back to something Wavewing had told him soon after he'd been taken into the Weedsnake school. The Elder Weedsnake had mentioned that oak was one of the few things that could kill a sea dragon, Weedsnakes in particular, as it was almost as poisonous to them as the toxin from a Venomous Vorpent was to humans.

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"So you still believe your brother will return?" a young man with jet black hair and hazel brown eyes asked. Kyra was talking to Artair Godrikson â€" the heir to the Meathead Tribe â€" just as her father had arranged whilst the two chiefs were talking further along the docks. She hated to admit it but Artair was a very nice guy to talk to and willingly listened to all of her bizarre stories of her life in another world.

"Well, this is Hiccup we're talking about," she replied, brushing a

lock of auburn hair out of the way, making sure to keep her dragon eye hidden for now. "You kind of know him a little better than I do."

"I guess," Artair shrugged. "It's hard to think that a kid like him would be able to train a dragon â€" it's incredible."

"Not something you'd expect from a scrap like him, huh?" Kyra couldn't help but joke. Artair let out a small laugh.

"Not at all," he agreed. "Then again, I never really knew what to expect from him â€" one time when I came here as a kid he was off hunting gnomes or trolls or something, the next time he was testing out this new weapon he'd made."

"What happened?" Kyra asked, a grin creeping onto her face.

"Let's just say more than a few Meatheads went home with their helmets dented," Artair replied, smirking slightly. Kyra couldn't help but let out a snort â€" just like Hiccup to get a few people (often himself included) sustaining a few bruises during his weapons tests. "Anyway, I'd better go," he excused himself, standing up and helping Kyra to her feet.

"Uh...sure," Kyra flushed. _Dammit, why do I have to get flustered around him? I barely know the guy,_ she thought to herself. She nervously brushed a lock of her out of her right eye and gently pushed Artair's hand away when he offered to get the bangs away from her left eye. She wasn't sure if she wanted him to see that yet. "Will I...see you again?"

"Course if you want," Artair smiled gently. Kyra smiled nervously (_Snap out of it, Kyra!_) and nodded. "Then I'll see you again soon â€" and you have to show me how to fly dragons next time!" he added eagerly. Kyra shrugged.

"I'll see what I can do," she smiled. "Later, then?"

"Later," Artair waved goodbye as he, his father and the other Meatheads set sail back to their home island. Stoick stood by his daughter and couldn't help but grin.

"I see you two were getting along swell," he chuckled. Kyra playfully punched his shoulder.

"We just met!" she protested. "But...yeah, he's a nice guy." Stoick smiled and nodded â€" this could work out. He patted Kyra's shoulder gently and flew Thornado back home, followed by Kyra and Windwalker.

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><p>AN: Figured I'd upload a couple of chapters seeing as I've kept you guys waiting for a while. Anyway, exams have been over for a while but I've just been working on completely finishing this story before uploading it - I'm happy with how it's turned out as a whole so keep an eye out for updates - they should get more frequent now that my holidays have started and the story itself is finished.

Yes, the scene with Astrid, Gobber and Hiccup halfway through the chapter was based on the deleted scene 'An Axe to Grind' from **_How to Train Your Dragon_****. Personally, I liked the scene and have often thought about how it could have been worked into the film so I did my best to work it into here.**

Thanks to everyone who's reviewed, followed and favourited **_How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse_****so far! It's great to see some familiar names such as Ferdoos and Drago829 from ****_How to Speak Dragonese_****and wonderful to see a lot of new ones as well! I hope you guys continue to enjoy the story.**

Reviews and constructive criticism welcome! If anything seems off, point it out to me in PM and I'll try to rectify it as soon as I can.

8. 8: Trials and Tribulations

Chapter Eight: Trails and Tribulations

Hiccup put the forge instruments away for the evening and began heading back towards the forest. He might as well stay in the Cove until Kyra found him a more permanent residence. As the sun set over the horizon, Hiccup couldn't help but gaze out to the ocean. It was hard to believe that for three years he'd been forced to call the place home but now he was where he really belonged the serenity of it seemed to come flooding back to him. A voice snapped him out of his daydreams.

"Enjoying the scenery, are we?" It was Astrid. Hiccup gulped and nodded nervously. _Why can't I just tell her?_ he groaned inwardly. It was what he wanted to do more than anything – tell Astrid that he was there, alive and well, trying to figure out how to break the curse that was upon him. It hurt him that he couldn't tell her the truth.

"Well, we don't exactly get views like this where I'm from," he said instead, snapping into his impression of his dad's voice and avoiding eye contact. Astrid stood silent for a few moments, admiring the sky turning from bright pink-orange to an inky blue-black.

"So you saw it happen, huh?" she asked calmly. Hiccup knew he had to watch his step with her – Astrid, despite her terrible acting skills, was a master of being able to keep her emotions under control when she wanted to find something out.

"The attack?" he made sure. Astrid nodded slowly. "Yeah...I saw. I reckon I was the only one from the school who did."

"Why didn't you help?" Astrid quizzed, her voice still maintaining the calm-before-the-storm tone.

"Any dragon worth his scales is terrified of that thing," Hiccup explained quickly. "The Darkwing's magic...I've never heard of a dragon who can match it." Astrid guessed that 'Darkwing' was the name of the dragon from three years ago.

"Hmmm," she sighed. "Even Kyra couldn't reverse whatever curse that thing put on her." Hiccup winced and subconsciously covered the back

of his left hand, worried that Astrid's already high suspicions would grow if she saw the curse mark there. "How long are you planning on staying?" she asked.

"Uh...as long as I need to, really," Hiccup replied. "I didn't exactly think things through when I ran away."

"Sounds like someone I know," Astrid rolled her eyes, the faintest glimmer of a fond smile creeping onto her face. She quickly snapped out of it. "Listen, all I want is for my fiancÃ© to come home. If you have anything to tell me, I suggest you do so."

"If I had anything I could tell you I would," Hiccup huffed. It was the honest truth â€" experience had taught him the difference between 'would' and 'could'. Hopefully Astrid would be able to find it in her heart to understand and forgive him once this was over. "Night, As...Ma'am," he corrected himself again, turning to head into the forest.

"It's Astrid, if it makes things easier for you," Astrid called after the boy as he vanished into the trees. "I'm _way_ too young to be a 'ma'am'," she muttered to herself.

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"**I certainly hope you know what you are doing!**" a Weedsnake hissed in anger. "**The boy is without doubt back on Berk by now and almost certainly be trying to cheat the curse the Darkwing place on him! You know that without the boy, our plans are for nought!**"

"**I am aware of this,**" another Weedsnake growled calmly. "**It would have been preferable for the boy to have remained away from his home island but it is of little consequence â€" he will soon have little choice but to return to the waves.**"

"**And how, might I ask?**" the first Weedsnake snickered. "**Or do I need to remind you that you were there the night he escaped and let him slip from your grasp?**"

"**Enough!**" the second roared. "**Do you not trust my judgement? The Darkwing brought the boy to us and he will surely do the same again â€" we strive towards the same goal after all.**"

"**Of course,**" a third Weedsnake cackled. "**To rid our world of any...contaminants from theirs.**"

"**I still don't see how this is possible if the Dragon Tamer becomes one of us**," the first Weedsnake huffed. "**Isn't he not as much of a...contaminant, as you say...as the girl who has the nerve to call herself our Goddess?**"

"**Must I remind you yet again of the tales surrounding Her Radiance?**" the second Weedsnake asked calmly. "**Before she took a human form, LohikÃ¶rme ruled our world side by side with her brother, the God of Spirits â€" Ivor, whose knowledge and wit rivalled even that of the human's god, Loki. He, however, was merely her right-hand man, although she loved him dearly. Driven mad by his desire to be more than a second-in-command, he flew into a terrible rage and transformed into a beast unlike any other, slaying his

sister, casting her from the heavens and cursing her human incarnations to the same fate. We know that unless this is carried out perfectly, she will never be returned to her divine form.**"

"**So they boy must perform this act to give us our true Goddess back? As a cursed being and under Ivor's command?*" the first Weedsnake affirmed.

"**Indeed. But the boy will never do such a thing willingly, unlike so many of the others. It has been because of their hatred that Lohikäärme has not yet been returned to us,**" the second Weedsnake explained. "**He has no hatred for his sister, which makes him the perfect candidate. However, he must become one of us completely if Ivor is to have any chance of having him do his bidding. The first step has been a long on, but I may have found a way to quicken the process.**"

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Hiccup opened his eyes to the sight of the autumn blue sky peeking through the foliage of the forest and listening to the sounds of wolves far off in the distance hunting before the winter months set in. Out of pure habit, he examined his hands â€" the webbed skin between his fingers had now vanished and had done the same on his feet. It was small triumph that Hiccup couldn't wait to share with Kyra â€" he was one step closer to regaining his humanity. Speaking of Kyra...

"Rise and shine!" a voice called as a figure leapt into the cove. "Fishlegs is insisting on an examination. Figured I might as well shut him up." Hiccup slowly got to his feet.

"Does he really have to?" he groaned. "It'll be a false entry to the Book of Dragons that'll need to be taken out anyway."

"Try telling Fishlegs that," Kyra huffed. "You know what he's like when it comes to new species."

"But I'm not even a real dragon!"

"_They_ don't know that!" Kyra snapped at her brother's protest. "Look, just humour him for now. It's not like you've got much else to do â€" it's just our luck that Gobber decided to close the forge today." _Damn. "_I don't want them to do this as much as you do but I can hardly say that if I'm supposed to be keeping this stupid secret!" she finished. Hiccup winced â€" he didn't know why he had to keep this whole thing a secret but he had no choice but to accept whatever help he could if he wanted to get his humanity back. Still, it looked as if there was no getting out of today, which sucked.

"Well, one day can't hurt," Hiccup smirked, holding up his hand. "Progress check?" Kyra's eyes lit up on seeing that the webbed skin was gone.

"Yes!" she grinned. "Good thing too â€" that was starting to creep me out." Hiccup made a face. "I know â€" you couldn't help it. Now come on, will you? They've been waiting long enough as it is."

Hiccup gave in and allowed his sister to half drag him to the Dragon Training Academy where the other teens were already waiting. Kyra apologised quickly for making them wait so long and brought Hiccup to stand in the middle of the arena the team had adopted years ago as their Dragon Training Academy. True, it was still used for Combat Training as well but it was better than learning how to kill dragons (even if the old tactics came in handy on a rare occasion, mostly with the bigger dragons).

"Oh, this is so exciting!" Fishlegs grinned. "Uh, you don't mind this, do you?" Hiccup shrugged " like Kyra said, he might as well humour Fishlegs.

"I don't have a problem with it," he supposed, slipping into his Stoick-impersonation. Fishlegs could hide his squeal of delight which caused the other teens to roll their eyes in embarrassment.

"Haven't seen you this excited since the day we discovered the Typhoomerang," Astrid smirked at Fishlegs who quickly recomposed himself. "So what's up first?" She didn't even glance at Hiccup as she spoke.

"Firepower!" Ruffnut grinned evilly.

"Physical strength!" Snotlout shouted at the same time.

"Air speed!" Tuffnut cut across. Hiccup grimaced " he didn't particularly want to do any of that, not if he wasn't supposed to use any of his dragon abilities at all if he was to become human again. Still, at least the twins broke out into another argument for a while to stall things.

"Why would you want to check out air speed first?" Ruffnut glared at her brother. "Firepower's way more fun!"

"Yeah, well, we always start with firepower!" Tuffnut argued. Kyra frowned " she was sure there hadn't been another new species discovery since the Typhoomerang. "And seeing how fast he can go would be cool in a new way! And how do we know he can even breathe fire?"

"We're not gonna know unless we check!" Ruffnut snapped. "Besides, air speed is, like, the boring-est test ever! That one can wait!"

"If you two are quite finished..." Astrid growled, grabbing the horns on the twins' helmets and forcing them apart. Hiccup was actually dreading things now the argument was over...the one time he was grateful that the twins were always arguing...

"I guess we might as well do the measurements first," Kyra suggested. "It gets the boring stuff out of the way plus it'll give us more time to check the other stuff later " that okay, Draco?" she asked.

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Draco nodded, although his face still suggested that he would rather be anywhere but in the arena being studied. Astrid fetched the measuring tape whilst Fishlegs got his notebook out and asked Draco

to extend his wings, which he did. Astrid had to get Kyra to hold the other end of the tape " the wingspan was so big.

"Wingspan: twelve feet," Astrid eventually said. Fishlegs made a note, deciding to check Draco's flying later much to Ruffnut's delight and Tuffnut's irritation. Astrid then measured the tail which was as long as Draco was tall, not counting the tail fins. "Tail length: five feet nine inches," she called out as Fishlegs also made a note of this. Draco was looking increasingly uncomfortable as the physical examinations went by. Snotlout suddenly froze when he examined Draco's right hand.

"Hey, weren't these webbed yesterday?" he frowned. Draco whipped his hand away and avoided eye contact with everyone. "What happened?"

"Uh...it's...umm...nothing," Draco stammered nervously. "Never mind."

"Seriously, you don't just suddenly go from having webbed hands to not in the space of twenty-four hours," Snotlout noted. Okay, when did he get so smart? Draco snapped.

"Look, it comes from not being in the water for a while, okay?" he growled. Kyra winced " what just happened there? "We adapt quickly, alright? I don't exactly need webbed hands and feet on land, do I?" Snotlout took a hasty step back and muttered something which only Kyra's super sharp hearing was able to pick up.

"Okay, okay...don't lose your head," Snotlout mumbled before muttering something else. "Man, and I thought Val's eyes went creepy when she was angry."

"Call me Val again and you'll see I don't need to go into my Shifter State to cause damage!" Kyra snapped although Snotlout's muttering caught her thinking. What had happened to Draco's eyes? She darted round to face the Halfling eye to eye but she couldn't see anything different " they were still emerald-green. Still, she knew they had to be careful. Before long, all of the measurements were done so Fishlegs moved onto the dragon ability tests.

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Hiccup had no idea what had come over him back there. His mind had just blanked out for a second and he got so angry at Snotlout for being so pushy...he calmed down soon enough but it was strange. He'd been annoyed at Snotlout before but it had never felt like real anger until now. Still, that was the least of his worries right now. Fishlegs wanted him to do some dragon ability tests...this was a step in the complete wrong direction at the moment but he had no choice. He might be able to weasel his way out of the firepower one as even he wasn't sure if he could produce a flame but physical strength and flying were a different matter entirely " dragons that were the same size or bigger than humans were stronger than them anyway due to increased muscle development and there was no way Hiccup could have reached the Cove without flying (even if it was having been caught by Windwalker but the teens didn't know that).

"Okay, first off " the Strength Test," Fishlegs decided. _Damn_. "Alright, Draco " this basically involves lifting objects of

increasing mass until you can't lift anymore." Hiccup nodded his understanding although he cast a brief glance at Kyra and saw how worried she looked "even so, it wasn't like he had any choice in the matter.

He would have to comply just for one day and use dragon abilities.

The teens set up an array of objects, each on increasing in mass (the heaviest objects had to be brought in by two dragons). Hiccup began with the lightest "the heaviest hammer in the armoury" and was astonished at how easy it was for him to lift it. His confidence slightly getting ahead of him, he skipped the next few objects and moved straight onto a cart full of weapons. Again, it took little effort for him to get it above the ground. Finally he lifted the heaviest object "a solid iron boat decoration which was nearly the size of Hookfang. This one was slightly harder but he was still able to get it off the ground.

"Whoa!" Snotlout grinned. "I've only ever seen Kyra lift that before."

"Strength: 16," Fishlegs noted down, scribbling a few notes into his book. "Okay " Flight and Air Speed next," he announced. "Do you fly much or are your wings normally just used for swimming, Draco?"

"Well, they can be used for both," Hiccup explained. "Bit like an albatross " they're better for gliding once you get the right height."

"Okay, guys " give him some space," Fishlegs instructed and the teens complied. Astrid watched in interest "the Halfling didn't appear to want to take part in any of these tests. He seemed incredibly reluctant to do any of the things he was asked to do. She paused when she spotted his left hand "there was a mark there, she couldn't tell what, as well as the gold band around his finger she'd seen the day before.

"What in Thor's name?" she muttered. She hadn't exactly believed the boy's cover up about the ring yesterday although she couldn't be sure if it was what she thought it was, but the mark increased her suspicions even more. What was it depicting? She had a theory forming in her head that was getting closer to being confirmed by the second.

Kyra caught Astrid's muttering and cast a nervous glance at the Nordic Blonde who appeared to shake it off. In the meantime, Hiccup jumped as hard as he could into the air, beating his wings furiously, just like when he'd first taken to the air after escaping the Weedsnakes and Coralflames in the water. Once he was in the air, however, flying came naturally to him and he flew through the air just a small distance above the Academy whilst Fishlegs took notes until Tuffnut cut in.

"Hey! How 'bout we see how fast you can go, huh?" he called eagerly. Hiccup hid a groan but complied "again, he didn't have much of a choice. He just hoped this didn't affect his progress too much. "One lap around Berk! We'll time it." On the cue to go, Hiccup flew upwards to gain some altitude before diving down to get his speed up.

Once he got going, he hit every checkpoint around the island course through memory and within minutes was back at the Academy where he landed rather clumsily â€" one could hardly blame him seeing as the last time he'd 'landed' he'd technically dived back into the sea.

"Time: one minute and ten seconds," Astrid noted blankly. "Not bad going for a sea-dragon."

"That makes a speed of..." Fishlegs thought for a while before jotting down the speed. "Wow â€" almost as fast as a Deadly Nadder! That really is pretty impressive!" Hiccup couldn't help but feel slightly good about himself. Despite this, he wasn't looking forward to what he knew was coming. "And finally, the Fire Test," Fishlegs announced. Hiccup grimaced, trying to look uncertain. "Just quickly â€" do Halflings even breathe fire, Draco?"

"Well, we're water-based dragons so..." Hiccup shrugged. "I mean, Scaldrons and Thunderdrums are Tidal Cla...I mean...water-based dragons and they don't breathe fire."

"That Darkwing or whatever you called it did," Astrid pointed out coldly, still avoiding eye contact. "We're asking whether your type can. Yes or no?"

"I don't know!" Hiccup snapped. "Just because I'm a Halfling you can't expect me to know everything about my species."

"Well, it would make sense for you to know," Astrid growled. Hiccup cowered slightly.

"Do you know everything about the human race?" he whimpered, desperate to get out of this. Thankfully it shut Astrid up but it didn't stop Ruffnut from wanting to see some destruction.

"Well, if you don't know, you can find out," she grinned slyly. "Go on! At least try!"

"You might as well â€" she's not ever gonna shut up until you do," Tuffnut groaned, earning nothing but a punch in the face from his sister. Hiccup huffed â€" he didn't even know how dragons produced fire in the first place! Still, he knew that Tuffnut was right â€" Ruffnut will never stop bugging him until she saw some form of destruction...probably both of the twins would, knowing them.

"Okay," he sighed. Grinning, the teens set up a bunch of targets from Hiccup to hit. They cleared out to the spectator stands to observe the proceedings although Kyra was clearly annoyed by the whole thing. True she'd persuaded Hiccup to come along and agree to this but she'd hoped he could talk his way out of this. Now thanks to her, it could take even longer for Hiccup to regain his humanity.

In the arena, Hiccup took a deep breath and focused his energy on producing a flame. He had no idea if it would work but it was worth a shot. Subconsciously, he found himself moving into a stance poised for attack: his legs apart to balance himself; his arms up ready to defend or attack as needed; his wings raised ominously; and his tail slowly shifting position as his energies focused on the target in front of him. His eyes narrowed in determination â€" somehow, he felt

that he could do this. He felt power building inside him â€" a burning strength waiting to be unleashed...

And unleash it, he did.

Hiccup released the build-up of power inside him in the form of a turquoise ball of flame. The flame completely obliterated the target but Hiccup barely took any notice as he turned to the second, third and fourth target in rapid succession. Kyra watched in a mixture of shock and amazement â€" Hiccup had completely changed. It was as if his behaviour had turned dragoon-like, much like she used to in her Shifter State. It frightened her. Then, briefly but certainly, she saw Hiccup's eyes, if only for a moment. They were no longer emerald-green but a burning red, just like the Darkwing's.

He had no idea he was producing the fire. He didn't even know who he was.

"STOP!" Kyra shrieked, leaping down into the arena without thinking. Thankfully Hiccup seemed to reach his shot limit (ten, more than most other dragons) but collapsed into Kyra's arms as soon as she was near him. "Hiccup..." she muttered, not loud enough for the others to hear. "Hiccup...listen to me! Wake up!" she muttered worriedly. Fortunately, the boy's eyes fluttered open â€" they were back to emerald-green.

"Urgh..." he groaned. "What...what happened?"

"Is he okay?" Astrid called, opening the gate and running over. The others followed closely behind her. Hiccup slowly sat up and rubbed his head â€" what had happened to him? Everything had blacked out again and yet, at the same time, everything seemed so clear.

"Looks a bit burnt out to me," Ruffnut commented.

"Awesome firepower, though!" Tuffnut smirked.

"You were the one who didn't even wanna see him do that test!"

"I never said that!"

"Guys!" Kyra snapped, helping the half-dragon boy to his feet. "You okay?" she asked nervously. Hiccup blinked a few times â€" he wasn't sure. He needed to find out what was going on...and fast.

"I don't...I'm not...I need a minute," he said plainly, jogging out of the Academy. Kyra bit her lip â€" maybe she shouldn't have pulled him into this.

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Astrid watched as Draco left the Academy. She hadn't seen someone look so worried about something apart from Kyra once she'd first heard the tales of the Dragon Shifter.

"What was with him during that last test?" she wondered aloud. Given how the Halfling had just acted during the test, her theory suddenly looked a little less likely. Hiccup would never lose control like that. "That fire looked familiar." Kyra glared at her.

"Before you say it, the Darkwing's fire was green, not turquoise!" she snapped. "Will you quit being so suspicious, Astrid? It's not helping him one bit!"

"What does he need help for?" Astrid retorted. "By the looks of things he's more than capable of taking care of himself! I don't know about you but I don't feel comfortable with a human-looking sea dragon that could go berserk on us at any second walking around our village!"

"He needs time, Astrid!" Kyra shouted back. "You gave me time to find my place and fit in! Why can't you do the same for him?!"

"You were different!" Astrid yelled.

"This is gonna be good," Tuffnut snickered.

"Shouldn't we calm them down?" Fishlegs muttered nervously.

"Let me think on it," Snotlout smirked.

"I gave up thinking," Ruffnut shrugged. The girls continued arguing.

"Are you not even the slightest bit suspicious about him, Kyra?" Astrid growled. "Have you not seen how much he looks like Hiccup? For all we know, the Darkwing's created him to trick us into a false sense of security by trusting this...thing...and wait until we're vulnerable. Then he'll go to the Darkwing and then we're all doomed. Don't you even miss Hiccup?"

"Don't you dare think that I don't!" Kyra shrieked. "I love Hiccup as much as you do, Astrid! He's my brother, for Thor's sake, so don't you even think that I don't miss him. Trust me if I still had my powers I would be spending every waking moment looking for him!"

"Oh, so just because you don't have your powers anymore â€" that's stopping you from looking for him?" Astrid yelled back. "Don't think I haven't noticed â€" you've stopped singing the Song of the Adriatic. You used to try to get it to reach the seas every day until that thing showed up!"

"And what good did it do?" Kyra cried, tears forming in her eyes. "I know Hiccup will come back. I know that the day we see the Darkwing again will be the day that we make it pay for what it did! You need to open your eyes, Astrid, because right now you've got blinkers on that have been formed by your suspicions!" Astrid made to argue further but Kyra cut across. "No, shut up! Draco needs our help right now if he's going to find a place where he belongs. He doesn't need any hard feelings being stacked up against him!"

With that Kyra stormed from the Academy, leaving the other teens speechless. Astrid stood for what seemed like hours, stunned into silence. It felt as if Kyra had slapped her around the face with a hot iron â€" she had never seen her best friend so angry before. What if Kyra was right and Draco needed help? For what, Astrid had no idea, but if it was true...she felt terrible. It wouldn't be the first time she'd been suspicious of someone who, deep down, only wanted someone to help them.

She didn't want to give this Draco a chance...but what if it was the right thing to do?

And, if her still existing suspicions proved correct, what if it _did_ lead to Hiccup?

9. 9: A Sister's History

Chapter Nine: A Sister's History

Hiccup raced down to Thor's Beach and hid himself in the cave where he'd taken shelter a few nights before. How could he have been so stupid as to agree to do those stupid tests? Now he had no idea how close he was to becoming himself again...as far as he knew, this could be a major setback for him and it could take even longer for him to regain his humanity. And what had happened to him during the Firepower Test? He'd felt...so different. It had felt as if it was no longer himself controlling his actions.

"What's happening to me?" he muttered angrily. "I was doing so well...what's going on?" Something suddenly panged in his mind â€" a disjointed voice. Hiccup tried to block it out, not wanting to use telepathic communication after having already broken his decent streak but the voice forced its way into his still existing communication mindset.

"**_Hiccup? Is that you?_**" It was Wavewing. Hiccup retreated further into the cave, not wanting to be seen by anyone, much less his old guardian. "**_Hiccup, I told you to stay away from here! What's happened?_**" Hiccup couldn't help but reply to the voice that invited so much trust and confidence.

"**_I...I couldn't help it..._**" he gulped. "**_I had to come back._**"

"**_And look at the good it's done for you!_**" Wavewing sighed. "**_What's wrong, Little One?_**"

"**_I...I came here about two days ago. Odin answered a prayer and spoke to me. He told me there was a way to regain my humanity._**"

"**_The king of your gods spoke to you? He found a way?_**"

"**_Yeah. And...only Kyra can help me,_**" Hiccup continued, still upset and angry beyond words with himself. Wavewing asked him to continue. "**_There are three tests I have to complete: Identity, Feelings and Heart._**" Hiccup quickly explained the concept of each task. "**_Except I'm worried...I slipped into dragon abilities earlier and...something happened..._**"

"**_Tell me, Hiccup._**"

"**_The others think I'm a new type of dragon so...they wanted to see what I could do. In the Firepower Test...I lost control. Something happened â€" it was as if it wasn't...me._**" There was no reply from Wavewing for a while.

"**_Have you made any improvement in regaining your old form?_**" he asked eventually.

"**_A little â€" the webbed hands and feet have gone,_**" Hiccup figured, glad that had remained that way by some sheer miracle.

"**_But why?_**"

"**_I overheard the other Weedsnakes and Coralflames talking about their plans to complete your dragon transformation,_**" Wavewing explained. "**_I believe they mentioned that the curse the Darkwing placed on you may hinder any progress you make to regain your human form by attempting to force you back into your buried dragon instincts. I fear they will use this to their advantage._**"

"**_What do I do?_**" Hiccup asked fearfully, knowing full well that he will most likely never regain his human form if he was turned into a dragon entirely.

"**_Come out._**" It wasn't a gentle request â€" more of an order â€" but Hiccup was so desperate for help that he trusted his guardian completely and exited the caves. He saw the Weedsnake Elder in the shallows just off Thor's Beach. He couldn't sense any other dragons nearby which was a huge relief. Hiccup had never been so relieved to see Wavewing â€" the majestic indigo-blue head, the warm glow of the amber eyes...they were a welcome sight for the worried seventeen year old.

"What do I need to do?" Hiccup asked again. Wavewing had something in his mouth, which he let go and allowed the waves to wash it up onto the sand. Hiccup examined it â€" it was a dragon's scale necklace. The scale was the same colour as his pearly green ones so it wouldn't be seen and the chain was a delicate silver colour which was almost lost on Hiccup's pearly skin unless the light caught it in just the right place.

"**That charm will prevent progress into one form being hindered by another**," Wavewing explained as Hiccup slipped the charm around his neck. "**I see you are intent on remaining here so I won't try to convince you otherwise. At any rate, I fear that the others will not stop searching the ocean until they find you. You may as well be safer here.**"

"Thanks," Hiccup smiled with relief. "Are you sure you'll be okay? We can protect you here â€" the other Weedsnakes..."

"**...are nothing without an Elder and they know it,**" Wavewing finished. "**Weedsnakes may be a species that will do anything to get what they want but they will not harm me unless they are certain they have someone to replace me and considering that I am the only one of us who can qualify as an Elder, they don't have much choice but to keep me alive. I shall be fine.**"

"Okay," Hiccup nodded. He heard his sister call from the top of the pass leading down to the beach. "I should go..."

"**Yes,**" Wavewing understood. "**Stay safe, Little One. If I find out anything else, you shall be the first to know. One more thing â€" do not tell anyone of this.**" He vanished before Hiccup could ask

why. He remained on the beach for a while until Kyra called his name again.

"Hiccup!" she called.

"Yeah, I'm here, Kyra!" he called back. Kyra jogged down the pass and ran over to her brother, giving him the biggest hug she'd given him in a while. "Okay, okay, okay...try not to strangle me, please..."

"Hiccup...what happened?" Kyra asked in worry. "You...you weren't...you."

"I know that," Hiccup sighed, averting his gaze.

"You sure you're okay?" Kyra quizzed. "I'm so sorry...I should never have let them do that..."

"It's okay," Hiccup tried to smile but it came out more like a grimace. "I'll...be alright."

"Sure?" Kyra made certain. Hiccup nodded so Kyra led him back up to the village. He noticed that the other teens were keeping their distance but it didn't bother him too much â€" he would stay away from him for a while if he'd seen what he'd been capable of earlier. He noticed Astrid standing by the teens' favourite meeting point â€" her storm blue gaze met his emerald one for a split second before she turned away, most likely to give Stormfly a spin as the afternoon drew on. Toothless walked over and grumbled.

"**How long until we'll be able to fly together again?**" he moaned, almost like a child. Hiccup chuckled and scratched behind his friend's ears.

"Soon...I hope," he sighed. He glanced at Kyra who nodded before taking the one-tail-finned Night Fury into the autumn afternoon sky and Windwalker flew alongside them. Hiccup couldn't explain how much he wanted it to be him flying Toothless. Just the one time the night he'd returned wasn't enough.

He just wanted his life back.

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"**_The boy accepted it, then?_**" a Weedsnake hissed. "**_He is more desperate for help than I imagined._**"

"**_Indeed, and it is this desperation that has clouded his judgement â€" it has done so ever since he first woke up in our waters_**," a second Weedsnake noted. "**_We are lucky to be able to use his hope against him._**"

"**_It just goes to show the fragility of the human heart!_**" a third dragon cackled. "**_This is why we can no longer allow the girl...nor any human female...to call themselves our Goddess._**"

"**_Exactly â€" the girl may be the incarnation of Lohikäärme, but she is a human nonetheless,_**" the second dragon agreed. "**_And should we permit her to continue to live, her heart will be her

downfall. Such is the fate of any human._**"

"**_Including that of her brother!_**" the first Weedsnake sneered. "**_Such irony â€" that the fate that befell our gods should affect those pitiful Haddock siblings,_**" it added, hissing 'Haddock' in disdain.

"**_Of course,_**" the second Weedsnake snarled. "**_But we have to remember that the boy cannot be aware of himself and his actions. He must be completely at the mercy of his instincts, which will no doubt take over. Once the boy has fulfilled his duties, and we have no further need of him, I shall make sure that he will be returned to his senses long enough to see what he has done, just as his curse dictates. It shall be the last thing he'll ever remember._**"

An evil roar that sounded suspiciously like laughter filled the underwater chamber.

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"Ah!" Kyra snapped awake with a start. What was that dream she'd had? She was in a chamber underwater...there had been dragons she'd never seen before shrouded in shadows...they were talking about her and Hiccup â€" and his curse, she didn't quite catch what. They'd mentioned something about their gods â€" they had to mean the Goddess of Dragons (herself) and someone else...she didn't know who. Kyra decided to take a trip to the mainland that day to visit the library. She had to find out any information she could about the legends surrounding the Goddess of Dragons...it was something that even she didn't know much about. All she knew was that the Goddess was reincarnated as a human every hundred years although she never knew why. The sun was barely rising over the horizon and her father was still asleep so Kyra took the chance to wake Windwalker up and set off immediately. The trip to the mainland would take an hour at most at full speed and the same on the way back and she wanted to get as much studying done as possible.

Well, the Haddock siblings weren't exactly known for being typical Vikings, who weren't usually big readers.

Kyra arrived at the library on the Mainland shortly after sunrise. She asked the elderly librarian there if there was anything on the legends of the Goddess of Dragons â€" the old man pointed her towards a dusty tome titled Myths of the Unknown. She thanked him and began flicking through the pages until she landed on the chapter labelled Dragon Folklore â€" translated from Dragonese by Dragon Shifter Brynja the Wise. The chapter title made Kyra pause for a while â€" she'd heard a little about Brynja the Wise. She had been one of the first Bog Burglars and was the advisor to the Chief-tess. Kyra had no idea that she'd also be a Dragon Shifter â€" practically her ancestor.

"Well, I hope you can answer my questions, Brynja," she prayed, turning the pages to the one marked The Goddess of Dragons and beginning to read:

The legends surrounding the dragon's Goddess are barely known in the human world. Indeed, the origins of the Dragon Shifter is a tale known to very few. If you are reading this, I pray to the gods that you use this knowledge wisely as I have learnt to do so in my time as

the dragons' human incarnation of their revered Goddess._

The Goddess of Dragons' name has been lost for centuries among humans although to the dragons it is still known and, I hope, shall be re-learned by humans in the years to come. The dragons' world is headed by the deities, Lohikäärme "the Goddess of Dragons" and her brother, the God of Spirits, Ivor. The existence of the second god is a secret known to only the eldest dragons "the reason why I shall move onto in a moment. Both gods governed over the dragons' world in a realm separate to that of Asgard, where our own gods reside and watch over us in our everyday lives, although they were known to Odin and his brethren, welcomed to Asgard whenever they wished.

Lohikäärme was the ruling Goddess, watching over her dragons as a mother would watch over her children. She took care of her world with a just, kind and caring heart and her powers were unmatched by the Gods of Asgard "her magic was on a different par to theirs and none could match it, save her brother, Ivor whose wit rivalled even that of Loki, the God of Trickery and Lies. His power stretched not only to the spirit that rang through the different communities of dragons but also to the spirit of humanity and he acted as the link between worlds. Side by side, the two gods made sure that dragons and humans lived alongside each other in perfect harmony, neither bothering the other unless absolutely necessary.

Each god of the dragons' world had their own responsibility: Lohikäärme would govern the laws and watch over the lives of the dragons whilst Ivor would maintain the balance between the dragon species as well as between dragons and humans. If ever an upset was caused, both gods would intervene "Lohikäärme leading the charge with Ivor fighting diligently by her side. Were a dragon ever in trouble, they would only have to pray that the Goddess of Dragons and the God of Spirit took their side and they were sure to prevail.

Now, although Lohikäärme loved her brother dearly, Ivor grew impatient. After centuries of being his sister's second-in-command, he began to long for more power. He began to feel as if he "the link between the two worlds" should be revered as the ruling god of the dragons' world. He began to quarrel with his sister, who tried to negotiate calmly with him but her wise words wouldn't get through to the angered god. Enraged that his sister would not agree to his demands, Ivor banished himself from the heavens. Lohikäärme never saw her brother the way she knew him again.

The next time Ivor returned to his celestial home, he was no longer the brother Lohikäärme had ruled alongside for centuries. In his anger and blind hatred, he had transformed into a terrible beast "a dragon beyond the control of the Goddess. Lohikäärme once again attempted to reach through "to save her brother before his hatred overtook him" but it was too late. She had no choice but to do battle with the one she loved more than her own existence.

_The war fought was long and bloody as dragons of all shapes and sizes chose the side of the god they believed would have the best chance of victory. Many dragons were slaughtered and many ancient species wiped from the face of the Earth, with several others including the Goddess' dragon of choice coming close to extinction. Eventually, the dragons realised that this war was not theirs to be

fought and the final battle took place in an area of sea far to the north, surrounded by a fog so thick that only a dragon would be able to find their way through. Lohikäärme was the more powerful of the two gods and eventually overpowered her brother but, when the time came for her to strike the final blow, she could not bring herself to lower her hand. She knew that, no matter how much her brother had changed, she could never find it in her heart to destroy him. She spared Ivor's life._

Her choice proved fatal. As Lohikäärme turned away, giving Ivor a chance at life, he rent her in two. As the Goddess drew her last, the dragons that remained fell silent â€" it was a day that has never been forgotten in the dragons' history. It was then...and only then...that Ivor finally regained his senses. As he realised what he had done, his despair fell as a rain which broke the link between the human and dragon worlds. Since then, humans and dragons have been at odds with each other and the harmony in which they once lived vanished almost overnight.

In his grief, Ivor tried to undo his actions but all he was able to save of Lohikäärme was her lingering spirit â€" the essence of her power. He begged it to return but all that he was able to achieve was to create a cycle â€" one of which the spirit of Lohikäärme would be reborn to humankind once every century. This human would become known as the Dragon Shifter, a powerful being with the powers to harness the abilities of dragons, even transform into one themselves. Distraught that his sister had been reduced from her divine form to that of a mere human, anger took over Ivor anew and he was cursed to forever remain the mindless beast his hatred had turned him into.

It is believed that Lohikäärme will return if one of Ivor's followers is to slay her when he is not himself. The dragons speak of a time when a boy once held close to the Dragon Shifter's heart with no hatred at all towards her will forget all of his ties to her and be tricked into performing such an act. The day this happens, however, will mark the end of either the human or the dragon world as the Gods' War will restart, this time dragging the humans into the fray. Rumour has it that a species of dragons lost even to their own world works alongside Ivor to find the right Dragon Shifter...to find the right boy...and strike when the time is right, planning to bring their world to the very top.

However, when such a time will come...if it ever comes at all...is unclear. The cycle of the Dragon Shifter is not a smooth one. The ethos is that the Shifter is reborn once every century â€" whilst this is indeed true, the gap between Shifters will vary as each dies at a different time. But the one similarity between all Dragon Shifters is one common factor that binds their fates together in a web of blood: each and every Dragon Shifter â€" every human chosen to bare the spirit of the Goddess Lohikäärme â€" is cursed to die by the hand of a brother fuelled with rage - the only thing that stops the Gods' war from beginning anew is that these brothers know what they are doing and perform the act out of their own choice. When this happens is never certain but it has been the same since before the records of the Dragon Shifter began. It is believed in the dragon world that Ivor's curse â€" the one binding him to his monstrous form â€" will be broken when that fate is cheated...only when the Dragon Shifter does not die at the hands of a brother shall Ivor's lingering spirit finally be at rest.

I pray that such a time foretold by the dragons never comes â€" not in my lifetime, nor in any other. Should LohikÃ¸Ã¸rme ever be returned to her divine form in the way described above, there is no telling what will happen to the world. Only one world â€" the humans or the dragons â€" will emerge triumphant and the other will be lost forever. If you are reading this, and you are a Dragon Shifter yourself, I pray that you will be able to cheat the fate we have been cursed to...I pray that your brother will never feel the hate in his heart that will drive him to murder...I pray that your brother will never fall under the spell Ivor will no doubt cast upon him to use him as a puppet...I pray...

I pray that you can somehow stop this.

Kyra sat silent for what seemed like hours. Her breathing had deepened and increased and her pulse had started racing. She couldn't believe what she had read â€" the Goddess of Dragons had been called LohikÃ¸Ã¸rme and she'd had a brother called Ivor. They had quarrelled and it had ended in LohikÃ¸Ã¸rme destruction and the first Dragon Shifter being born. Ivor, in his despair and anger, however, had cursed each Dragon Shifter to share his sister's fate â€" to be slain by their brothers in a fit of anger. However, the time that the Dragon Shifter is killed by a brother who doesn't know what he is doing...a brother who is being used as a puppet...shall be the day LohikÃ¸Ã¸rme returns as a Goddess and the dreadful war between the two gods shall start anew, except this time it would end in the destruction of either the human or the dragon world...

Unless the curse was cheated.

"Hiccup..." Kyra gasped. Were the Weedsnakes he had been talking about the lost dragon species working alongside Ivor? If so, what beast form did he take? The Darkwing had spoken to her as if he knew her, calling her an imposter and to give 'her' back. Was it possible that...?

Kyra slammed the book shut and raced outside. She'd been in the library all day and it was growing late so she quickly mounted Windwalker and shot off towards Berk over the horizon. Her desire to help Hiccup had now increased. She had to make sure that he never fell under Ivor's curse...that he would never turn against her. She somehow knew that Hiccup was the perfect candidate for the catalyst to restart the war â€" he was closer to her than any friend, had never felt any true hatred towards her and had missed her more than anything when she'd gone missing for twelve years. She had to save him. She had to help return him to his human form before it was too late. If not for the sake of the two worlds, nor her own, than for his.

She would never let her brother be used in such a way.

* * *

><p>AN: Yay, back story! In all honesty, I felt like the origins and the story of the Dragon Shifter weren't really explained terribly well in *_How to Speak Dragonese_****, despite it being one of the main plot points, so I guessed that now was as good a time as any to shed some light on Kyra's abilities.**

****We're well over a third of the way through this story now - thanks to everyone who's favourited and reviewed so far! Hope you enjoy the rest of ****_How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse_**** as it comes.****

10. 10: Is this what Love feels like?

****Chapter Ten: Is this what Love feels like?****

Stoick was slightly worried when his daughter didn't return home by the time she'd mentioned in her note but when she did, his worry increased as he saw the fear written into the emerald-green right eye and Night Fury green left eye on her face.

"Kyra, are you alright?" he asked gently as she dismounted Windwalker. "You've been out all day."

"I just...needed to check something," Kyra muttered. "Dad, can I go for a walk for a while?"

"Sure," Stoick agreed. "Is anything wrong?"

"I need to get some things off my chest," Kyra replied, her gaze constantly darting towards the forest.

"Alright," Stoick nodded. "Just don't be out too long. Oh, and Mugdug and I have arranged for you and Artair to meet up again tomorrow â€" is that okay?" Kyra couldn't help but smile â€" secretly she was glad at the chance to see Artair again.

"Course," she smiled, heading towards the forest. "I'll be back later. See you soon, Dad!"

"Be careful, Kyra!" Stoick waved as his daughter disappeared into the trees. He couldn't help but be happy of how she'd grown up â€" any proud father worth his salt would be over the moon to have a daughter like Kyra.

/\

Kyra raced through the trees as fast as she could as soon as she was out of sight of the village. She had to be sure...she had to make sure he was okay. The information she'd found out that day had gotten her worried beyond fright for Hiccup â€" she knew they had to get him back to normal as quickly as possible. Leaping down into the Cove, she stumbled upon a snoozing Hiccup by the lake.

"Hiccup!" she gasped, out of worry rather than lack of breath. "Wake up!" The boy stirred but he made no gesture of greeting towards Kyra. Frustrated, she stormed over and forced him to turn around by grabbing his shoulder â€" she let go almost instantly. Hiccup's face was completely blank and his irises were rimmed with red â€" you wouldn't notice unless you had eyesight like Kyra's. She let out a small squeak and Hiccup blinked a few times, coming back into the real world.

"Kyra?" he frowned, shaking his head clear. "What happened? When did I wake up?"

"Just now," Kyra bit her lip. "What the heck happened to you just

then?"

"What do you mean?" Hiccup yawned. Kyra kept her mouth shut â€" she didn't want to worry him any further, particularly now.

"Never mind," she said instead. "I'm just worried about you, that's all." Hiccup smiled â€" Kyra really was a great sister. She just worried a little too much.

"I'm fine, Kyra â€" seriously," he smiled sleepily. "Where've you been? I was stuck in the forge all day."

"Library," Kyra replied simply.

"I thought Vikings weren't big readers."

"They are if they're us."

"What did you go there for?"

"Information," Kyra answered. "Found out quite a lot...about how I'm...you know...me."

"You found out about the origins of the Dragon Shifter?" Hiccup quizzed. Kyra nodded and explained what she'd found out, leaving out the cursed fate all Shifters before her had suffered.

"It's kind of sad, really," she sighed. "To think that...Ivor went so far," she gulped. "I just...Lohikäärme loved him more than anything and Ivor had nothing against her except..."

"...blind rage," Hiccup finished sadly. He noticed that Kyra seemed uncommonly upset â€" had she found out something else? "You okay?" he asked gently, noticing tears well up in his sister's eyes. Kyra ignored the question and instead flung her arms around her brother's neck.

"Just promise me one thing..." she whispered. "Don't let them do anything else to you...don't stop fighting..."

"Kyra, what do you mean?" Hiccup mumbled, confused. Even so, he held his sister close in comfort.

"I know you..." Kyra sniffed, tears streaming down her freckled cheeks. "You'd never hurt me...would you?"

"Of course not!" Hiccup exclaimed, astonished that Kyra would ask such a question. He put his hands on her shoulders and looked her straight in the eye. "Kyra â€" I would never..._could_ never...do anything to hurt you! Don't you ever even think that I would!"

"I know..." Kyra gulped. "Just...remember who you are." With that she turned away and ran back towards the village, leaving Hiccup standing dumbfounded and confused. Why would Kyra ask him to remember who he was? What did she mean when she told him to not let 'them' do anything else? Did she mean the Darkwing? If so, why mention 'them'? And why would she tell him not to stop fighting? Nothing made sense to him.

/\

Astrid had taken to keeping an eye on Draco from a distance â€" after what had happened at the Academy she was starting to wonder what was going on with him that made Kyra so worried. He'd just been breathing fire and it wasn't as if that was abnormal for a dragon (with the exceptions of the Scauldron, Thunderdrum and Changewing but she ignored those). Still, the Halfling had avoided the teens like the plague since then, finding excuses to get away from them if they asked him anything about himself. It was strange â€" the dragon could communicate with humans better than any other dragon given his ability to speak Norse and yet despite his claims that he wanted to leave his own kind, it was as if he wanted nothing to do with them either.

Astrid snapped out of her thoughts when Kyra finally emerged from her house. Astrid was slightly taken aback when she first saw her and had to blink a couple of times to make sure she was seeing things correctly. Kyra wasn't in her usual dark green dress that Astrid had made for her â€" instead she was clothed in a simple but attractive full length emerald-green gown with long sleeves in a style similar to the ladies' of the Mainland. Around her waist she wore a plain golden belt and on her head was the golden crown Hiccup made her for her fifteenth birthday. Her dark auburn hair was neatly combed and fell gently over her shoulders with the usual fringe arrangement covering her Night Fury left eye. As usual, her pink gem pendant was around her neck and it stood out quite well against the dark green of the dress, glinting in the sun.

"Someone's making an effort," Astrid grinned jokingly. She knew that Kyra was meeting Artair again today â€" the girl had to really like him if she wanted to make such an impression. Especially seeing as she'd only met the guy once before (not including when the Meatheads came to Berk for the annual treaty renewal).

"Oh, please," Kyra giggled slightly. "It's nothing..."

"You're wearing your crown!" Astrid pointed out. "You never pay this much attention to your appearance." Kyra grinned and shrugged. "Be sure to tell me everything when you get back, okay? I want all the details."

"We're just talking!" Kyra protested.

"Admit it â€" you like him, don't you?" Astrid winked. Kyra blushed as red as the evening sky and punched Astrid in the shoulder, walking off towards the docks with a "No comment!" response. Astrid couldn't help but smile in amusement â€" her best friend was as easy to read as a book when her emotions were strong enough. She turned her attention back to the forge where Draco could be seen hammering a sword blade into shape. She sighed and walked over â€" she might as well try talking to him.

/\

"Hey."

Hiccup glanced up from his work and looked over his shoulder to see Astrid standing just outside the forge. Gulping, he avoided eye contact â€" he was still embarrassed about the whole fire thing, even if Wavewing had given him a way to fix it.

"Hi," he muttered, coughing a bit as he made sure his Scottish accent was being used. Astrid kept her distance for a while but it wasn't a 'keeping her distance' as in she didn't want to go any closer, but a 'keeping her distance' as in she knew the poor boy wanted his space.

"You okay? You haven't spoken to us for a while," she asked instead. Hiccup bit his lip.

"I...um..." he stammered. _Great, the one time I need Loki on my side again_, he cursed. "It's nothing. I just need some time to think."

"About what?" Astrid quizzed. "Are you missing your family?" Hiccup's heart stopped for a split second. It was true â€" he did miss his family, even if he was with them right now (not that they, excluding Kyra, knew it). Just not the family Astrid was thinking about.

"I thought we made it clear that I don't want to go back," he grumbled, slamming the hammer down on the metal. "There's no way I'm going back to the sea if I can help it." Astrid nodded her understanding.

"Then what do you want to do?" she asked. "You think you'll stay?"

"If I can," Hiccup sighed after a brief pause. "Depends if I'm gonna be of any use here."

"Well, you've helped bring weapons production back up to the usual rate," Astrid couldn't help but smile slightly as she indicated the pile of swords and axes the boy had done during the course of the morning. "Who knows?" Hiccup's mouth stretched into the smallest of grins. Astrid changed the subject. "Why were you so worried about the whole dragon studying thing the other day? You did really well â€" I haven't seen Fishlegs as excited since we discovered the Typhoomerang and that was years ago."

"Well...I didn't know I could do any of that stuff," Hiccup replied truthfully. "And...well, when you find out you can do things you never knew you could...it's kinda scary if I'm honest." Astrid nodded â€" she took that as an acceptable answer. Hiccup suddenly remembered that he was supposed to be working. "Anyway, is there anything you need? Can I help with anything at all?"

"Actually I was wondering if you'd like to join us for Campfire Night," Astrid shrugged. "We have one every Odin's Day. I mean, the others are pretty much set about having you on the team so it'd be nice for you to get to know us a little better." Hiccup blinked in surprise â€" hadn't been expecting that.

"Uh...umm...I..." he stammered. Astrid smiled subconsciously â€" miraculously, it wasn't a fake, forced smile. It was a genuine one with a welcoming warmth Hiccup had missed during his three years away from Berk.

"Come on â€" it'll be fun," she grinned. "Besides â€" it'll give you something else to do other than just laze about in the forest all evening."

"How'd you...?"

"I think I'd notice someone going into the forest every evening," Astrid smirked. "You're not exactly the most stealthy of dragons." The words almost stabbed Hiccup in the chest like a knife â€" he was still seen as a dragon. He shouldn't be surprised â€" he still had a tail and two wings sprouting from his back â€" but it hurt nonetheless that he couldn't tell the others the truth if he wanted to become him again.

/\

"I'm not the only kid â€" just the eldest son. I've got three sisters who are older than me â€" they left home about two years ago now," Artair explained to Kyra as they sat in their usual spot on the docks. "I'd heard you'd gone missing when you were small â€" Hiccup must have really missed you."

"Yeah," Kyra replied absent-mindedly. Hiccup had told her multiple times how much he'd missed her during her twelve-year absence despite barely knowing her when she went missing and it made her feel incredibly guilty that she had no idea that they were even related. True she'd noticed the similarities between herself and her favourite 'fictional' character back in the other world but she never would have imagined that the world Hiccup was from was also her own. It would have surpassed her imagination to believe Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III was her younger brother.

"This other world...sounds really weird," Artair continued. "I mean...machines that allow you to see what's going on anywhere in the world? That's...insane!"

"Tell me about it," Kyra grimaced. "Think how I felt having to live there!" She was just glad Artair didn't think she was crazy and that he was willing to listen to all of this. She'd told him most of the stuff about her life in the other world before so she was glad to have that out of the way. She had yet to show him her eye but she wasn't ready for that â€" it wasn't exactly something you could show to someone you barely knew. "Oh, by the way â€" last time you said you wanted to learn how to fly a dragon?" she grinned, changing the topic. Artair's hazel eyes lit up.

"Do I ever!" he smiled eagerly. Kyra stood up and brushed her dress down before taking Artair to Windwalker who was waiting for her rider at the end of the docks. "Wow â€" so this is your dragon?" he breathed in amazement.

"Artair Godrikson, meet Windwalker," Kyra introduced the two of them. Windwalker gazed at Artair in curiosity â€" Kyra was happy that the Star Backed Night Fury didn't do anything to spook the guy. "Windwalker â€" Artair." Artair could only stare in amazement â€" he'd seen dragons before but Windwalker was something else.

"She's...beautiful," he smiled. Kyra took his hand and held it out gently so that Windwalker could show she trusted him â€" Artair's heart stopped momentarily when the dragon gently nudged his hand in a sign of trust. "Whoa..."

"The trick is to be gentle," Kyra explained, scratching Windwalker fondly behind the ear. "If a dragon gives you their trust, you can't betray it â€" the last thing you want is an irritated dragon on your hands." Artair nodded his understanding. Windwalker cast her gaze to Kyra.

"**_So this is the one who will be your mate?_**" she asked teasingly. Kyra rolled her eyes.

"**_Oh, lay off!_**" she retorted in equal jest. "**_He's a nice guy â€" no one's stopping me from liking him. And right now, it's a 'could be', not a 'will be'._**" Windwalker seemed less than convinced. Kyra proceeded to mount the dragon and indicated for Artair to climb up behind her. "Now hold tight," she warned. "I don't want to have anyone falling off â€" it's harder than it looks, trust me." Artair gulped and held on tight as Kyra led Windwalker into a vertical takeoff. Once they were in the air, Windwalker levelled out and Artair opened his eyes â€" he was astonished at the view.

"Whoa!" he exclaimed with all of the enthusiasm of a child receiving their first Snoggletog present. "Gods â€" this is incredible!" Kyra smiled and took Artair on a tour of the island from the air. No matter how many times she flew around Berk, it never failed to amaze her how beautiful her home was and how proud she was to live there. "Do you always see things like this?" Artair asked as they passed over the village. Kyra thought for a while.

"Being in the air kind of brings a new perspective on things," she answered. "You don't realise how amazing things are until you see them from a different angle." Artair smiled behind her and placed a hand on her shoulder â€" in return, Kyra grinned and placed a hand on his before leading Windwalker back down to terra firma. Artair dismounted first before helping Kyra off the dragon.

"You're so lucky here," he smiled as Windwalker raced off to find Toothless. "To think it wouldn't have been possible without your brother." Kyra smiled â€" it was true. If it hadn't been for Hiccup, she may never have met Windwalker. Heck, _she_ might not even be around if she was unlucky.

"You're right," she smiled before turning to face Artair. "And we'll help the Meatheads out as soon as we can â€" I promise." Artair grinned his thanks before heading off to find his father, saying he couldn't wait to see Kyra again. Secretly, she shared the feeling â€" Kyra didn't know why but every time she even thought of Artair her heart started fluttering. She couldn't help but smile as she waved goodbye to the Meathead tribe.

She still didn't like the idea of an arranged marriage, but what if being with Artair wasn't such a bad one?

/\

"So?" Astrid pressed Kyra as she emerged from the house again, this time in her more casual get-up.

"Took him for a flight on Windwalker," Kyra replied simply. "You can guess the reaction." Astrid rolled her eyes and grinned â€" everyone was amazed when they saw Berk from the air.

"Admit it, Kyra â€" you like him," she smirked playfully. "You've been grinning your head off since they left." Kyra blushed bright red again. "Knew it!"

"Do you feel this way around Hiccup?" Kyra asked embarrassingly. Astrid's smile faded for a moment and her gaze drifted to her engagement ring.

"How do you mean?"

"Smiling...your heart feeling like it's going to jump out of your chest...that kind of thing."

Astrid paused before answering.

"Yeah," she replied with a sad smile. "I guess...that's what it feels like." Kyra knew what Astrid was talking about but she was still unsure. Was it possible to love someone you'd met officially only a few times? She wasn't one to believe in 'love at first sight' â€" the clichÃ© had been over used so many times â€" but was it actually possible? "What's Artair like, anyway?" _Thank the gods for the change in conversation_.

"Really nice," Kyra replied, her smile returning. "And, honestly, anyone who can listen to and believe my past is a good person to know for me." Astrid grinned.

"What else?" she pressed. "Come on! Give me details." Kyra gave in.

"Well, he's...smart, fun..."

"Cute?" Astrid teased. Kyra couldn't help it.

"Gorgeous!" she admitted. Astrid laughed â€" it was nice to know that Kyra seemed to like this guy. There was a very high possibility that she would marry him so it was pretty important that they got along.

"You reckon it'll work?" she asked. "I mean...arranged marriage with this guy." Kyra thought for a while.

"I'll give it a few more visits," she decided, a look of uncertainty crossing her face as if she was confused with her own emotions. "I want to be sure." Astrid nodded her understanding and suggested they head towards the lookout tower where a small fire had already been lit for Campfire Night.

11. 11: Hope and False Help

****Chapter Eleven: Hope and False Help****

Hiccup was actually grateful for the team asking him to join them for Campfire Night. It helped him feel like he was..._him_ again â€" it just brought that sense of normality back to him. He felt as if the last three years hadn't happened. He was even enjoying the team making complete fun of each other in the stories they were telling!

"You should have seen it!" Ruffnut snickered. "Tuffnut was _totally_ hitting on that Bog Burglar last time they came here!"

"Was not!" Tuffnut protested.

"Were so!"

"Not as bad as Snotlout!" Tuffnut sneered. Snotlout couldn't be happier that the only light was the fire.

"Hey, that girl was into me," he stammered. "Who could resist _the_ Viking?"

"More like who in their right mind _can't_ resist the walking-talking Terror-brain," Astrid cut in jokingly. Everyone except Snotlout burst out laughing â€" Kyra was clutching her sides and nearly fell off her seat! Astrid stopped herself from laughing and turned to Hiccup. "Oh, Draco â€" you've got to hear some of the stuff these guys do."

"Like what?" Hiccup grinned. Astrid thought carefully before selecting her target.

"Like Snotlout â€" he used to wear tights," she grinned. The team burst out laughing again at Snotlout's expense. He quickly thought up of a comeback.

"Well...Fishlegs once entered a Gronkle Lookalike Contest..._and won_" he jeered. Fishlegs looked put out by this and instantly bit back.

"Snotlout came in fourth and cried!" he snapped. Everyone started laughing again.

"Oh, is that funny? You think that's funny?" Snotlout huffed. "Well, Draco, maybe you should know some of the _twins'_ secrets!" Kyra's eyes went wide â€" this should be fun.

"Oh, please! This'll be good," she chuckled.

"Like he wants to know any of that..._you shut up!_" Ruffnut hissed in Snotlout's face, grabbing his shirt and punching him in the nose. Even so, Tuffnut instantly cut in.

"Once, Ruffnut was sent to her room without dinner," he snickered. "So she ate the bugs that were living in the wall!" Hiccup made a noise that was a cross between a gag and a snort of laughter. It may have been gross but it was a Ruffnut-thing to do. To be fair, it was a Thorston-thing really. Ruffnut was quick with a comeback.

"Tuffnut used to stay home every Freya's Day night just to have a bedtime story!" she snapped. Astrid laughed until her cheeks were sore â€" listening to the Thorston twins having a banter was possibly some of the best entertainment on the Isle of Berk. Still, the targets had swapped from the twins to the remaining members of the team.

"Astrid couldn't plait her own hair until she was thirteen!" Tuffnut suddenly shouted. Astrid's eyes went wide and her face flushed bright red with embarrassment. Hiccup wasn't able to stop a loud 'Ha!'

escape his lips â€" he was actually thankful that Astrid didn't really know who he was at this moment in time (although he was fairly certain she had a hunch â€" he had a theory that it was what was keeping his hands and feet un-webbed despite how many times he'd had to fly out of the Cove in the mornings as well as the accident at Dragon Training, which was a good thing, if he had to be honest).

"It's hard for some people!" Astrid protested.

"Of _course_ it is," Kyra smirked without thinking. Astrid glared at her â€" her target was selected.

"Kyra once wore Hiccup's underpants on a visit to the Mainland!" she smirked.

"Hey!" Kyra snapped. Hiccup cast a shocked and confused look at Kyra who had no choice but to use telepathic communication. "**_What? My stuff was in the laundry!_**"

"I'm sorry, but you were kinda asking for it," Astrid snickered. Kyra straightened herself up and glared at Astrid.

"During said visit to the Mainland, _Astrid_ had a bit too much mead and attempted to dance an entire Celtic hornpipe without falling over," she snickered. Once again a wave of laughter from the lookout tower could be heard from the other side of the village â€" Hiccup's eyes were watering due to laughing so much. Astrid frowned for a second â€" she couldn't remember that being her. Clearly Snotlout couldn't either.

"That was you," he pointed out. Kyra cussed under her breath â€" dammit, she was a bad enough dancer as it was. She'd been hoping everyone had forgotten about that. She glared at Snotlout with the final blow.

"Whatever, Lout â€" you kissed a goat," she shrugged.

Hiccup could have died laughing.

/\

Hiccup's sides were still hurting as he made his way back to the Cove. Astrid was walking with him as the night drew on.

"Well, I don't think I've had that much fun in ages," Astrid grinned. Hiccup hadn't seen her eyes lit up the way they were in a while. "Although, seriously â€" you should have seen Kyra that year." Hiccup secretly wished he could have done â€" even he was a better dancer than Kyra and that was when they hadn't had any mead at all!

"Did Snotlout really kiss a goat, though?" he snickered. Astrid nodded, noting that the guy was drunk at the time, and Hiccup's grin widened further, if that was possible. "The guy's more desperate than I thought..."

"Meh â€" I saw one of the Bog Burglars giving him the eye last time they were here," Astrid shrugged. "Who knows? He might actually get lucky this time." She paused. "You know...you're not that bad, Draco." Hiccup stopped in his tracks for a moment.

"You really think so?"

"Mmm-hmm," Astrid nodded. "Listen â€" I'm sorry I doubted you before. I just...I'm just the kind of person who does that â€" I've never really been good with new people." Hiccup knew that all too well, although Astrid had been better with Kyra.

"It's okay," he smiled gently. "I'm not exactly much of a people-person either." Astrid chuckled slightly.

"I can see what you meant by the human-counterparts thing," she grinned slightly. "You're just like him." Hiccup tried to smile but it came out more like a grimace â€" it was still the worst thing ever that Astrid had to figure out that he was really him and that he'd been lying this whole time. This sucked. Still, she did still suspect things so hopefully it was just a matter of time before she decided to confirm things. Even so, she was probably gonna kill him for lying to her...this triple sucked.

"Well...uh...I should get going," he noted, indicating the forest. "Because..."

"Yeah, of course," Astrid nodded quickly as she brushed a lock of hair behind her ear. "So I guess we'll see you tomorrow then?"

"Sure," Hiccup nodded. "And, hey, listen â€" thanks for inviting me tonight. I had a great time," he grinned. Astrid smiled back.

"You're welcome," she replied, heading back to the village. "Night, Draco."

"Good night," Hiccup waved as Astrid vanished into the village and he headed back through the trees. Once he reached the Cove, he lay down with his eyes cast up to the sky where the stars glittered in their millions. Somehow he could feel that he was getting closer to becoming him again â€" he didn't know how he knew...he just did. Eventually, sleep took over the half-dragon boy and Hiccup drifted off, letting sleep to take over and allowing his mind to wander.

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****_Well, Little One. You've certainly made...progress._****

Who's there?

****_It is only me â€" don't worry._****

Wavewing? What is it?

****_I have new for you â€" something that will help you._****

What?

****_First things first: the necklace I gave you can only help you if you completely let go of yourself. Having two forms fighting for**

dominance is never a good thing, especially when cheating a curse as powerful as the Darkwing's._**

Well, I can easily just be me â€" that's kinda what Odin said was part of what I needed to do anyway. So...yeah â€" I'm getting there.

Wonderful. Second: I believe your sister told you the story of Lohikäärme and Ivor, right?

Yeah â€" she did. Why?

I have reason to suspect that the Darkwing may be one of the dragons that supported Ivor during the Gods' War, hence why its magic is so powerful. It may be that the best way to become yourself again is to enlist the power of the Goddess Lohikäärme herself.

I've pretty much done that â€" Kyra's helping me in every way she can...

The girl fell victim to the Darkwing's curse just as you did. Her powers have left her. How can she stand a chance of helping you?

What do you mean?

The Goddess' powers lay dormant until the new Dragon Shifter is born â€" until the current one is gone, they have no hope of moving on.

But, I...

I fear that this may not be enough. As powerful as the Dragon Shifter may be, we are talking about divine magic here â€" something beyond mortal capabilities. Even that of the Dragon Shifter.

What do I need to do?

Free our Goddess. Release her from the prison of flesh she has been forced into for these past centuries. Free Lohikäärme and let your true self return.

/\

Kyra jogged through the forest towards the Cove as she had been doing for the past week. Hiccup was making some really good progress despite the stint at the Academy so she was all for getting him set for the day so that he could continue working towards gaining his human form again. There was no sound coming from the Cove when she arrived so she assumed that Hiccup was sleeping in â€" heck, even she'd had a longer lie-in than usual after yesterday.

"Hiccup!" she called cheerily, jumping down into the Cove. "Rise and shine! Come on â€" Gobber's been waiting at the forge for an hour. He said he wants you to help with dentistry today â€" I'd probably do what he asks because..." No answer came from the half-dragon curled up by the pond. "Hiccup?" Kyra rolled her eyes and walked over. "Come on â€" I know last night was fun but you never sleep in this...late..."

Hiccup slowly stood up but there was something about him that made Kyra freeze in her tracks. The way he moved...it wasn't right...it was so...animalistic. His breathing sounded wrong as well â€" it was heavy and rasped. Kyra was sure she could hear a hint of a growl coming from the boy as well.

"Hiccup?" she mumbled, backing away slowly. "Hiccup â€" stop it. You're scaring me and you know how hard that is." Hiccup turned around, his wings extended ominously. As he turned to face Kyra, she let out a small squeak â€" his eyes were bright red, just like they had been during the Firepower Test a couple of days ago. He wasn't himself â€" he wasn't aware of himself. "Hiccup...wake up â€" this isn't you..." she stammered. Hiccup didn't seem to hear her and advanced towards her, his face full of hatred. Kyra glanced at his hands â€" the webbed skin was back and his nails had extended into sharp claws, capable of tearing her to shreds.

It dawned on her what was going on. Somehow, something was controlling Hiccup indirectly so that his actions were his own but he didn't know what he was doing. Something had completely reversed his progress to make him more of a dragon than he ever was before, entirely reliant on his instincts in a similar way to Kyra in her Shifter State. Except his actions wouldn't be random â€" Kyra could see behind the face of anger that this Hiccup â€" this Hiccup that wasn't her brother â€" only had one goal.

And that was to kill her.

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"HELP!"

Astrid whipped her head around and shot her hand to her neck as she heard the scream coming from the forest. The villagers around her, including Stoick and Thornado, all stopped in their tracks at the sound, wondering what on earth was going on. Moments later, a girl came pelting out of the trees at full speed â€" it was Kyra. Hot on her heels was a human-like dragon with dark turquoise wings and burning red eyes.

Astrid was shocked â€" what had happened to Draco? Yesterday he'd been so...normal...so...nice. Something had completely changed him but she had no time to contemplate what as Stoick ordered the village to stop the Halfling from hurting his daughter. Astrid quickly jumped onto Stormfly and shot after the Halfling, attempting to slow him down with a burst of flame but he was completely unaffected by it, leaping straight through the magnesium based fire that was hot enough to melt steel.

"Twins! Gas him out!" she ordered. Ruffnut and Tuffnut dove in on Barf-Belch and let rip a wall of gas which would normally knock a person out for about a week but instead Draco again completely ignored it. In desperation, the twins ignited the gas which did knock the Halfling down for a moment, giving Kyra some time to get some distance from him and call Windwalker. Draco was back up on his feet in seconds so Fishlegs intervened by having Meatlug fire flaming boulders at the Halfling but Draco weaved in and out of the barrage with ease.

"Stop that dragon at all costs!" Stoick ordered as Draco followed Kyra into the air. Astrid rammed into his side on Stormfly, tackling him to the ground but Draco was stronger than she anticipated and quickly threw her off but not before she saw the eyes â€" they had been green before, not red. Plus, despite the anger plastered in them, there was a blankness behind them that didn't feel right. Astrid's momentary lapse of concentration meant that Draco had caught up with Kyra, forcing her to take to the ground again.

"Stop it!" she shrieked. "This isn't you! Don't let them do this!" Draco lunged at Kyra but the girl whipped out her dagger to block him before his claws reached her neck. She punched him in the face and Snotlout swooped in on Hookfang to keep the Halfling occupied whilst Kyra made a run for it. Astrid was confused â€" what had Kyra been yelling about? It was more obvious than ever that she knew more about Draco than she was letting on and had one from the start. The question was: what?

The villagers did all they could to stop Draco from getting anywhere near Kyra but nothing they did seemed to hinder the Halfling â€" he seemed to know what they were going to do before they did it and even nothing the dragons did could stop him. Toothless tried tackling him at one point, even roaring at him desperately, but his cries fell on deaf ears as Draco seemed to block out the world around him, completely set on taking Kyra down. Stoick called Gobber to use his old Dragon Fighting skills but Astrid was reluctant to let anyone kill Draco â€" she just needed to find a way to get him to snap out of whatever trance he was in.

"Ruff, Tuff â€" you guys get the Mangler and a couple of bola cannons," she instructed. "Snotlout, Fishlegs â€" make sure his tail's pinned down. I'll see what I can do to knock him out." She dashed off to find something heavy she could use to get Draco unconscious without killing him â€" if she could at least knock the guy out it'll give them a chance to get Kyra somewhere safe. Speaking of Kyra, she'd begun climbing up onto the roofs of houses in a ditch attempt to give Draco an obstacle of some sort but seeing that he could fly and she couldn't meant that it didn't do her much good. Draco set off a bright turquoise fireball that knocked Kyra off the roof she was on (also setting said roof on fire) and was about to strike when a bola cannon hit him in the side, tangling his wings in a mass of rope and downing him.

The twins loaded an extra bola cannon into the Mangler just in case they needed it whilst Snotlout and Fishlegs pinned Draco's tail down â€" it was still free of the rope and swished and flailed about so much it actually gave them nosebleeds. Draco was unfortunately stronger than Astrid anticipated and his claws sliced through the rope like a knife cutting through hot butter â€" she had to act quickly. Kyra had nowhere else to run and Draco was advancing on her quickly. Thinking fast, she glanced at the docks to see the Meathead ships docking â€" no doubt Artair on a visit to see Kyra.

"Perfect timing," she muttered. "Windwalker! Get Artair!" she yelled at the Star Backed Night Fury. "I've got this!" Reluctantly, Windwalker shot off to the docks whilst Astrid raced forward as Draco grabbed Kyra's wrist and wrenched her dagger from her hands.

"Please..." Kyra whimpered. "You promised..."

Astrid could have sworn she saw Draco flinch but she didn't have time to think about it â€" the guy was inches away from bringing that dagger down across Kyra's throat. Without a second thought, she rammed into his side, knocking him off-balance. At that moment, Windwalker arrived with Artair who grabbed Kyra's outstretched hand and hoisted her onto the dragon's back. Draco snapped and tried to follow but Astrid leapt onto his back, drawing his attention to her instead. The entire village surrounded the warrior teen and the dragon but stood back for fear of Astrid getting hurt.

Draco raised the silver blade as if to strike Astrid and remove her from his way but Astrid was just about able to grab his wrist and punch him in the chest, winding him long enough for her to get the weapon out of his hands. Artair landed with Kyra some distance away and Draco spotted them. He was about to make a break for it when Astrid grabbed his wings, causing him to cry out in pain and allowing Astrid to get him in a headlock. As the dragon struggled to get Astrid off his back, his hands tried to pull Astrid's away from his neck and Astrid spotted something on his left hand â€" it was a dark mark â€" it looked like a burn mark of some kind. Whatever it was, it looked off. Then, as the dragon continued to struggle, Astrid felt something around his neck â€" something out of place. It felt like a chain.

Subconsciously, Astrid's fingers closed around the chain that was around Draco's neck as he wrenched himself away from her. The Nordic Blonde's grip was so strong, however, that the chain broke and flew off in Astrid's hands. Draco stumbled around for a bit and shook his head but Astrid wasn't taking any chances so she grabbed the nearest shield she could see and walloped him on the head, knocking him unconscious.

"Take him to Berk Prison!" Stoick ordered. "I'll be having words with him later." Gobber and Spitelout, Snotlout's father and Stoick's brother, grabbed Draco roughly by the arms and dragged him to Berk Prison where he would await punishment. Stoick walked over to Astrid who had collapsed in exhaustion. "Are you alright, Astrid?"

"Never mind me," Astrid panted, wiping her brow as sweat beads glistened on her forehead. "What about Kyra?"

"I'm okay..." Kyra stammered, shaking in Artair's arms nearby. Astrid was stunned â€" she had never seen Kyra so frightened. Why hadn't she been able to fight Draco herself? Even with her powers gone she was still strong enough to hold her own. What was stopping her?

"Just...Dad â€" Draco...he...he wasn't himself. Something happened..."

"I know he wasn't acting how he usually was," Stoick cut across. "But that doesn't matter â€" what matters is that he tried to hurt you. I'll see to this." He walked off to the prison, leaving the teens in the plaza. Astrid walked over to the Kyra and Artair, closely followed by the rest of the teens.

"You okay?" Astrid grimaced, although she knew that Kyra was anything but okay. Kyra nodded shakily anyway. "What happened to him?"

"I don't...*gulp*...I don't know," Kyra sniffed, gulping back tears of relief. "I just went to the Cove to check on him and...something

was different about him...he wasn't..."

"It's okay," Artair comforted, holding Kyra close. Astrid could see why Kyra liked the guy â€" he really was a nice person. If he cared for Kyra this much, the arranged marriage could work. She shook it from her mind â€" now wasn't the time. "Has he been like this before?" Kyra paused before answering.

"Once," she mumbled. "Except that time he snapped out of it." Fishlegs frowned.

"When was this?" he asked. Kyra scrunched her face up trying to remember.

"Two days after we asked him to do those tests," she replied. "I'd just gotten back from the library and..."

"Why would you go visit him after that?" Snotlout quizzed. Kyra made a move as if to answer but shut her mouth at the last second, shaking her head miserably and finally letting the tears go. Astrid patted her shoulder gently as Artair held her close to him. It was then that Astrid remembered the necklace.

"Say â€" was he ever wearing this before?" she asked everyone, holding up the broken chain. Kyra calmed herself down and took a look at the thing â€" the chain was made from a fine silver that would have easily been lost on Draco's pearly skin and the scale attached to the chain was the same colour as his scales. If he had been wearing it this whole time, no one would have ever noticed â€" it was only by sheer luck that Astrid had found it during the struggle before.

"I'm not sure," Kyra frowned, examining it closely. Windwalker sniffed the necklace and suddenly growled at it in a similar way to how most dragons would growl at an eel that had made its way into their food. "***What is it?*" Kyra asked in Dragonese.

"***That thing is evil!*" Windwalker hissed. "***It is a cursed scale â€" if he had been wearing that...it must have been that thing that was making him attack you,*)" she added scornfully. Kyra's eyes widened with shock, as did everyone else's when she translated the sentence.

"No wonder he stumbled when I took it off," Astrid realised.

"So does this mean Draco really '_wasn't_' wasn't himself?" Ruffnut asked.

"As in he didn't even know who he was?" Tuffnut added.

"Or what he was doing?"

"I was gonna say that!"

"Well, I said it first!"

"SHUT UP!" the other teens, including Artair, chorused before the argument between the twins escalated. Astrid glanced back at Kyra who was now leaning against Windwalker's side â€" she looked almost sad, rather than relieved that she was still alive.

"Are you sure you're okay, Kyra?" Astrid asked. Kyra insisted that she was fine. "You yelled at Draco earlier â€" you said he'd promised something? And...to not let 'them' do anything else to him?"

"Yeah, what was that all about?" Snotlout shrugged. Kyra sighed.

"I...can't say," she replied firmly. "All I can say is that he came to me for help â€" that's why he's here. The rest...you'll have to find out for yourselves." She stood up and walked away, a clear indication that the conversation was over. Artair offered to take care of her and followed her with Windwalker, leaving the Defenders of Berk in the plaza.

"A dragon that comes to its Goddess' human incarnation for help," Fishlegs noted. "Makes sense, I guess."

"But why would it be something that he can only tell Kyra about?" Astrid wondered. "He's more human than any dragon I've ever seen â€" surely he could've told us."

"Must be a dragon thing," Ruffnut shrugged. "I sure wouldn't talk to a dragon if I needed help with something that was a human problem."

"Yeah â€" I can name a few," Tuffnut mumbled. Ruffnut still caught it and shoved him in the nearest dragon dung pile. It got Astrid thinking though â€" the mark she'd seen on Draco's left hand before looked incredibly familiar. Casting her mind back to it, it looked just like Kyra's burn mark...

"Maybe she was the only one he thought could help him," she realised. The others stared at her. "There's definitely more to Draco than we think."

"Well, yeah!" Tuffnut drooled sarcastically. "We've found out he's bipo...OUCH!" All that earned him was a punch in the face from Astrid.

"I don't think any of that was him," she snapped. "There's a mark on his left hand, guys â€" what if the Darkwing cursed him too?" Fishlegs eyes widened with excitement.

"That could explain the sudden change in behaviour!" he realised. "And it could also explain why he only went to Kyra for help."

"No, it doesn't," Snotlout made a face.

"Yes, it does!" Fishlegs pointed out. "Kyra's the human incarnation of the Goddess of Dragons, remember? Draco must have gone to her for help because..."

"...he thought she could lift his curse!" Astrid finished.

"Okay...but why would he stay when she couldn't?" Snotlout pointed out. "I thought it was pretty clear that Kyra can't exactly use any of her powers right now."

"True," Astrid frowned. Wow â€" Snotlout was more observant than she thought. "I'll go talk to him," she decided. "If I tell him we know what his situation is, maybe he'll tell us enough to help him."

"That is if Stoick will let us," Ruffnut pointed out cynically. "You do remember the penalty for trying to kill a member of the chief's family, right?" Astrid didn't remember â€" she knew the penalty for trying to kill a member of the chief's family.

She would need to talk to Draco quickly.

* * *

><p>AN: Yes, the segment at the beginning was based on 'Friends' - I love that show, I couldn't help it.

****Busy times ahead so updates will become slightly further apart, just to give you guys a heads up, but I'll try to update as often as I can.****

****Also, I've uploaded some designs of Kyra onto deviantArt as she looks during ****_How to Speak Dragonese_**** and at the beginning of ****_How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse_****, when she's aged 14-15. Tell me what you think in the reviews and I've got more designs on the way of how she looks at 18+. Follow the link to see the designs!****

****Once again, hope you guys are enjoying the story!****

**** art/HTTYD-OC-character-designs-aged-14-15-38782860
2?ga_submit_new=10%253A1374675692****

12. 12: Near-Death Experience

****Chapter Twelve: Near-Death Experience****

Astrid dismounted Stormfly as she arrived at Berk Prison on the other side of the island. Apparently Draco hadn't woken up since Astrid knocked him out earlier although he was still breathing, much to Astrid's relief. As she walked through the corridors, she bumped into Stoick.

"On your way to talk to him?" he asked bluntly. Astrid nodded.

"Sir â€" I really don't think he was himself," she repeated, holding up the necklace. "He was wearing this â€" Windwalker had a look at it and said it was making Draco crazy."

"He could have well been wearing that to make sure he was strong enough to overcome obstacles to get to Kyra," Stoick replied gruffly. "Much like a Berserker â€" you know how some of them..."

"Yeah, yeah, I know," Astrid cut across before they got to the gruesome details. "But Stoick...I know you could be right but...I saw something on his hand when we were fighting â€" there was a mark just like Kyra's on his left hand."

"A curse mark from that dragon?" Stoick quizzed.

"Uh-huh," Astrid nodded. "Just...can you please bear that in mind when deciding what'll happen to him?" she asked, biting her lip nervously. "Please? Because we think he came here for Kyra's help in breaking whatever curse he's under and maybe it just took over him for while â€" the necklace might have amplified the curse."

"I'll keep that in mind," Stoick sighed. "But even if Draco is cursed, it doesn't change the fact that he just tried to kill my daughter." Astrid gulped â€" she was afraid of that. "You have until I reach my decision." He walked off followed by Gobber and Spitelout so Astrid headed down along the cells until she found one with a still very much unconscious Halfling lying on the bed inside. She dragged over a nearby stool and sat down â€" Draco looked so peaceful like this. It was as if he had nothing to worry about when he was asleep...everything that had happened â€" it was all forgotten. She sat there for a minute or so before he stirred.

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Hiccup groaned as he felt a throbbing pain shoot through his head. His eyes slowly opened to reveal a wooden ceiling which he couldn't recognise â€" when did he get inside? He was sure he'd fallen asleep in the Cove. He could see ribbons of sunlight peeking through the rafters above his head â€" how long had he been asleep? Had Kyra found him in the Cove still asleep, thought there was something wrong and taken him to the Infirmary? She really did worry too much. Rubbing his head, Hiccup slowly sat up and froze when he saw his hands â€" they were webbed again, as were his feet. What had he done this time?

"Sorry I had to hit you so hard," a voice sounded. Hiccup shook himself awake and his vision focused completely as he took in his surroundings â€" to his shock, he was in a cell in Berk Prison. Perfect...he must have done something really bad to have landed himself in here. Through the barred doors was the source of the voice â€" it was Astrid.

"Huh?" Hiccup groaned. "Why? Why did you hit me? What happened?"

"You don't remember?" Astrid frowned. Hiccup shook his head. "Well...gods, how do I put this?"

"Put what?" Hiccup huffed. His head was already hurting â€" he didn't need any more confusion! Astrid bit her lip.

"You just completely lost it," she explained nervously. Hiccup's eyes narrowed.

"Lost it how?" he asked worriedly. What Astrid said next was the last thing he wanted to hear.

"You tried to..." Astrid began, gulping. "...you just tried to kill Kyra." Hiccup's eyes suddenly widened with horror â€" how could he? He would never do that!

"What? What are you saying?" he cried. "I would never...I could never..." he stammered, his hand subconsciously flying to where the necklace Wavewing had given him had been. When he realised it wasn't

there, he panicked.

"Looking for this?" Astrid asked, holding it up. Hiccup recognised the silver chain and pearl-green scale. "It's a good thing I got it off you, to be honest. Windwalker had a look at it â€" she reckons this is what made you crazy." Hiccup's face was one of complete disbelief.

"But..." he muttered, barely loud enough for Astrid to hear. "He said it would help..." Astrid frowned.

"'He'?" she repeated. "Who's 'he'?" Hiccup caught himself and didn't answer. "Look â€" we know you came here for help. How can we give that help to you if you won't tell us anything?"

"How do you...? What are you talking about?" Hiccup asked bitterly, avoiding eye contact. Astrid indicated Hiccup's hand.

"That mark on your hand â€" Kyra's had one just like it ever since the Darkwing or whatever you called it attacked three years ago," she explained. Hiccup glanced at his left hand â€" the mark wasn't the only thing there. "What did that thing do to you?" Hiccup winced at Astrid's question.

"I...I can't say," he replied sadly. Astrid groaned in exasperation.

"What is it that you can't say?" she cried. "Look â€" I lost someone very close to me to that..._thing_! I know I was doubtful of you before but if the Darkwing was responsible for this we want to help!"

"You can't!" Hiccup snapped, a trace of a sob rising in his throat. "As much as I would appreciate your help...you just can't..." he gulped, unable to stop the tears from leaking out of his forest green eyes.

"What do you mean by that?" Astrid asked. Hiccup sighed.

"This isn't something you can just help me with," he explained sadly. "This is...was something I should have done as I was told to in the first place...but I was too desperate," he sighed, more to himself than anything else. He was still unable to believe that Wavewing â€" the guardian he'd trusted for three years â€" had given him something that he'd claimed would help but had in fact had done the complete opposite.

"Is that why you wore this?" Astrid asked, holding up the necklace. "Because 'he' said it could help you, whoever 'he' is." Hiccup nodded reluctantly. "Can't you just tell me who this 'he' is?" Hiccup relented â€" she wouldn't give up.

"Someone I thought I could trust," he sighed. "Just leave it at that." He'd never felt so betrayed in his life â€" heck, even when Heather stole the Book of Dragons it wasn't as bad as this. Wavewing had actually tried to make him kill his own sister...something he thought he would never do. But...it wasn't him, was it? He wasn't thinking straight... "Is Kyra okay?" he asked.

"She's a bit shaken but she's alright," Astrid replied simply. "She

knows you weren't yourself back then. She knows you wouldn't have done that intentionally." Hiccup couldn't even force a smile â€" although he hadn't attacked Kyra deliberately, it didn't change the fact that he'd gone back on a promise that he'd made to her merely a few nights before. There was silence between the pair for a few moments before Astrid spoke up again. "I know you're a good person, Draco."

"Still? After what I did?" Hiccup huffed.

"You didn't do it on purpose!" Astrid insisted. "I know that!" She paused before continuing. "You're too much like him to do something like that and know you're doing it." Hiccup blinked in surprise.

"You think?" he asked, scorn still there in his voice. Astrid nodded.

"It's not just what you look like," she explained. "You're like Hiccup in every way â€" it scares me but...at the same time..." she stopped again. "You give me hope that he's still out there. Hiccup may have been missing for three years but you..." she couldn't help but smile sadly. "You make it feel as if he's home again...that he's closer than we realise. And...I kinda need to thank you for that."

Hiccup's heart lifted at Astrid's words and he couldn't stop the sad smile creep onto his face. He glanced briefly at his hands and feet to see the webbed skin had gone again â€" it seemed a shame that this was as far as he'd come to being himself again knowing that in a few hours tops he would face the penalty for trying to kill Kyra.

As the son of the chief he knew all too well what he was going to face.

"Astrid, I..." he began. "I'm sorry I couldn't tell you anything," he sighed, glancing at the gold band that hadn't left his finger for three years. "But...you've made my time here...you and the rest of the guys...you made my time here worth leaving the sea for," he finished sadly. "Thanks."

Astrid didn't get time to reply as Stoick, Gobber, Spitelout and a few other Vikings rounded the corner. Hiccup glanced outside â€" he saw the masked Viking there and knew what was going to come. Quickly, he tore a piece of his seaweed-patched tunic off and wrapped something inside before scribbling a note down on a piece of parchment using a scrap of charcoal on the floor. Astrid moved out the way as Stoick opened the door to Hiccup's cell.

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"The decision has been made," Stoick said firmly. Draco looked at the chief in the eye for a split second before breaking eye contact â€" it was as if he understood what was going to happen to him. Astrid looked stunned and defeated, knowing she couldn't change the decision. She'd expected it â€" she'd just hoped Stoick would have taken into account the fact Draco hadn't done anything by his own choice.

Draco stood up as the masked Viking walked into the cell and

dutifully put his hands behind his back, moving his wings so that they wouldn't get in the way. His wrists were bound and he was roughly led out of the cell with Stoick leading in front and the masked Viking, Gobber and Spitelout following behind. Before they vanished down the corridor, Draco kicked something towards the entrance of the cell and glanced mournfully at Astrid who could only stare apologetically back. Once they were gone, Astrid cast her gaze to the floor where a small seaweed-cloth-patched package lay next to a piece of parchment that had been roughly scribbled on. Picking it up, she read the runes that had been hurriedly scratched onto the parchment:

Astrid

I really am sorry I couldn't tell you everything. I guess it's a bit late to tell you but I lied when I said I was a Halfling â€" those dragons don't even exist. In fact, I kind of lied to you about everything â€" my name isn't even Draco. I never left the sea because I was running away from home. I guess I left the sea because...I wanted to come back home.

I should have told you all this before but like I said, I couldn't. And this really is a 'couldn't', not a 'wouldn't' â€" someone very close to me taught me a long time ago that there is a big difference between the two. Kyra really was the only one who could help me with this and I guess I let her down most of all â€" no amount of sorry will ever change that, I know that much.

I don't think I'll see you again â€" maybe in Valhalla but that depends on where I end up. The thing in this package...well, Hiccup would have wanted you to have it. I know I do. Just...don't ever forget me, will you?

I hope you can understand.

A friend

Astrid was stunned by the note. Draco had known his fate? But how could he know as a dragon foreign to the human ways? Unless his...wait, he'd just explained in the note that everything he'd told them was a lie. Why would he lie? Her curiosity now piqued and growing continuously, Astrid carefully opened the package, the dried seaweed crackling under her fingers. The first thing that struck her was the colour of the cloth itself â€" it was stained with salt and seaweed sap but there was no mistaking the pale green it had once been.

"What?" Astrid muttered, opening the package entirely and squeaking in shock when she saw the contents. In her surprise, she dropped the package and the contents and fell backwards over the stool she'd been sitting on moments before as something tiny clattered onto the stone floor of the prison. Scrambling over, Astrid fumbled to pick the object up and when she finally did she had to double-check to make sure she wasn't seeing things.

The object was a small gold ring. It was nothing too fancy but it was still clear that it was the work of a master smith. Being in the salt water of the ocean hadn't affected it in the slightest and it was in near perfect condition. On the inside of the ring was a tiny etching of a dragon that matched the one on the inside of Astrid's diamond

and sapphire studded ring perfectly. There was no doubting it â€" it was Hiccup's engagement ring.

"Why would he have this?" Astrid muttered to herself, still unable to believe it. Hiccup had been wearing the ring on the night he vanished â€" heck, it had been the day he'd first put it on â€" and Astrid knew that, like her, he would never let it leave his finger willingly. That could mean two things: one was that Hiccup was dead and Draco, being a dragon counterpart, had taken the ring after finding him. But Draco had admitted that he wasn't a dragon counterpart to Hiccup in saying that everything he'd told the teens was a lie so that only left Astrid's other option.

She ran out of the prison, clasping the ring tightly in her hand.

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Kyra tried to reach Hiccup but her father and Artair both held her back. Tears were staining her oval face â€" she didn't want this to happen...she _couldn't_ let it happen.

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Hiccup could only look at his sister in sorrow as he allowed himself to be led to the platform. He gulped when he saw the noose â€" thank the gods he would be blindfolded. He didn't want to see Kyra's face when it happened.

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Astrid suddenly wished that she'd followed the other Vikings earlier. The prison was on the other side of the island and Stormfly had already flown off to try to comfort Kyra no doubt ("_Damn dragon!_"). Already Astrid could feel her sides splitting from stitches.

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Toothless crowed in despair as his rider was taken up to the platform â€" it took six Vikings in total to stop him from running over to Hiccup. He whimpered mournfully as Hiccup stepped onto the small stool underneath the noose. Once the rope was around the boy's neck, all the executioner had to do was kick that stool from under his feet and it would be over.

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Hiccup closed his eyes and held his breath as his crime, charge and sentence were read out by Stoick. He never imagined that his dad would be the one announcing his own death...it was a frightening thought that made Hiccup sick to his stomach. He tried to block out the world but the words rang clearly through his head. He'd done something terrible and now he would pay the ultimate price.

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Astrid wanted more than anything to stop for a breather but she knew she couldn't afford to waste any time. Her mind suddenly cast back to

when Kyra had first arrived on Berk and she'd helped Hiccup and Astrid out with Battle Training. She'd helped Hiccup by using her knowledge of the other world of How to Train Your Dragon to help Hiccup realise that he was left-handed, drastically improving his sword skills. For Astrid, she'd helped her with her speed and stealth and now the words rang through Astrid's memory like a chord.

'Try to feel as light as you can. You know Stormfly? Try to feel as if you are her. Be quick; agile; you are a Deadly Nadder.'

As soon as Astrid remembered those words, a new burst of energy surged through her as if she were calling upon Stormfly's strength. Astrid continued racing towards Raven's Point where she knew everyone else would be.

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Tears flowed freely down Kyra's face as the sack was placed over Hiccup's head. She could no longer watch and she buried her face in Artair's shoulder. She'd failed Hiccup. She'd failed to help him get back to normal. And now she was losing him forever.

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Hiccup gulped as the sack was placed over his head. Any moment now it would be over. At least it would be quick...he hoped. He braced himself and waited for the ground to disappear beneath his feet. Steeling himself, he counted down his final seconds.

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Astrid shoved through the crowd as the executioner neared the small stool the dragon-boy was standing on. Knowing she didn't have time to stop him herself, Astrid thought fast and grabbed a dagger from the belt of a nearby Viking. Ignoring the angry shouts aimed at her, she threw it all her strength and resisted sighing with relief as the blade sliced through the rope and stuck fast in the pillar behind it..

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Hiccup could help but yelp as the ground vanished from under his feet and he could feel himself dropping...but only for a moment as the next second his feet met solid ground again. This time he yelped in shock and he collapsed onto the wooden platform as he overbalanced before yelping again " this time in pain when his forehead met the stool and his face became best friends with the ground. Okay, what had just happened? Had the rope been too weak and snapped when the stool was kicked out from underneath his feet? He froze when he heard something happening around him " it sounded like a fight of some kind and he heard the executioner grunt but he himself was never picked up off the ground.

"Don't touch him!" a female voice shouted over the angry cries of the crowd. Hiccup had to be hearing things " was that Astrid?

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Astrid had leapt up onto the platform as soon as the rope had been

cut and knocked the executioner away using a 'borrowed' hammer before the man even had time to think. Considering he was about twice her size, it was an impressive feat but she had no time to savour her small victory â€" she had to get her point across to the crowd before they started baying for her blood as well as the dragon-boy's.

"Astrid! What in Niflheim do you think you're doing?" Stoick bellowed. Astrid stood by the dragon-boy defiantly as he curled up into a defensive ball, his wings automatically coming forward to shield himself.

"Putting the record straight!" Astrid snapped. "Didn't you even listen to what I said earlier?" A gasp of horror went around the crowd â€" no one spoke to the chief in that manner.

"I told you it doesn't change things â€" he still tried to..." Stoick began.

"I don't care!" Astrid interrupted. "But isn't the death penalty for those who kill or try to kill a member of the chief's family who had full intent to do so and knew what they were doing in the process?" Stoick remained silent â€" Astrid's knowledge of the laws rivalled Hiccup's. "And I _told _you â€" _he didn't know what he was doing_" she hissed.

"Dad, it's true!" Kyra insisted.

"Kyra, I'd recommend you stay out of this..." Stoick sighed calmly but Astrid hadn't finished.

"You know what your problem is? You don't give yourself a chance to understand people," she growled. Stoick's frown deepened into a glare of pure anger. "It's been your problem ever since Hiccup was born; it was your problem when you gave Kyra up to the Outcasts and it's your problem right now!"

"Astrid!" Astrid's father cried in the crowd. "That's enough..."

"No! It's not enough!" Astrid snapped in retaliation. "Look, I know I've got similar issues â€" I don't give people a chance sometimes â€" but when I did for this guy, I got to know him...and I _know_ that he would never hurt anyone, especially Kyra, intentionally." She paused to take a breath. She couldn't remember the last time she'd argued so passionately about something. "He's a good person, Stoick, and he needs our help."

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Hiccup could hardly believe what he was hearing. He'd never heard Astrid be so adamant about something...true, she knew how to get what she wanted when it suited her but this was a side of her that he didn't know even existed. Astrid was putting her life on the line to make sure he kept his...she was arguing for his life. He could hear his dad arguing back but Astrid's voice had such persuasion behind it that any counter-argument was falling flat in comparison to the sheer determination Astrid had to prove her case. What came next, however, he did not expect.

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"Besides..." Astrid sighed, reaching into her pocket. "I see Hiccup in this boy, Stoick." She stared at the chief directly in the eye and there was silence in the crowd. "It's not just the way he looks...but how he is. You must've seen it too."

Stoick had seen it. The dragon-boy's nature...his dry sense of humour...his quick wit...they matched Hiccup's perfectly.

"Then there's this," Astrid added, taking the ring out of her pocket. Stoick recognised it immediately "it was Hiccup's, the same one he'd worn the night he disappeared beneath the waves. "He went out of his way to give this to me not minutes ago. He thought his life was over and he wanted to make sure I understood..." Astrid stopped for a moment. "And I think I do," she smiled sadly before looking at Stoick again. "What would you do if you killed your own son?" she finished.

Stoick nodded at Gobber and Spitelout who hoisted the dragon-boy to his feet, releasing him from his bounds and removing the bag that had acted as a blindfold.

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Hiccup took a large gulp of fresh air and squinted as his vision readjusted to the sunlight. He rubbed his wrists as the ropes binding them were removed before looking at the girl who had saved him "Astrid stood close by with a relieved smile spreading across her face as she hugged him close. In thanks, he could do nothing else but hug her back.

"Astrid..." he mumbled, a sob of pure relief reluctantly rising in his throat. "I...I...I don't..." he gulped.

"Don't worry," Astrid reassured, patting his back gently. "I'm just glad I got here in time." Hiccup's mouth stretched into the smallest of his crooked smiles.

"About the note and the ring," he muttered, breaking the hug. Glancing over Astrid's shoulder he could just about see Kyra crying tears of relief as Artair stood by her side. He'd be having words with her later about that but there was serious emphasis on the 'later'. "Uh...I...I meant what I said."

"Can't you tell us the truth now?" Astrid asked. "Like I said "we want to help...I know we haven't come across it the right way...but still. What is it that you couldn't tell us?" she quizzed, her storm-blue eyes narrowing slightly but never losing the soft caring tone that Hiccup couldn't remember seeing for quite some time. "Besides, I've got and have had a very strong hunch since the day you showed up and I just need confirmation that I'm right." Okay, Hiccup should have guessed that Astrid would pick something up. Still, he knew he couldn't tell them outright who he was "if what Odin had said was anything to go by it sounded like they needed to figure it out themselves. Then again, Vikings weren't known to be the smartest people (with a few exceptions) but even so...

"Listen, are you who I think you are or not?" Astrid pressed, putting her hands on her hips.

"Depends who you think I am," Hiccup couldn't help but joke dryly. Astrid punched his arm.

"Stop avoiding the question! I know you know who I think you are and I'm starting to get a very strong suspicion that you are who I think you are!"

"It's just that I...OOFF!" Hiccup exclaimed as Kyra rammed into him, throwing her arms around his neck. Smiling, he hugged her back and his grin widened further when she spoke telepathically to him and said:

"**_You're almost there,_**" she smiled. "**_I can tell._**" It was a huge boost of encouragement which Hiccup needed after what had occurred that morning. She broke the hug and turned to face Astrid. "Thanks, Astrid," she grinned. "I thought he was a goner for a second back there."

/\

"No problem," Astrid shrugged. She pulled Kyra aside for a moment. "Kyra â€" what is it that you know about him that we don't?"

"Astrid, I told you â€" I can't say," Kyra huffed. "It's something you'll have to..." Astrid pressed her when she paused. "Haven't you even the slightest idea?" Astrid remained silent for a few moments before answering.

"Like I said â€" I've got a hunch," she admitted. "I've had one all week. I really think...it could be," she noted, keeping one eye on the dragon-boy. Astrid still couldn't be sure â€" there were still some inconsistencies between this boy and Hiccup â€" his leg being one of them. She turned back to the dragon-boy and took his hand, leading him back towards the village. "Come on â€" you need a rest if anything after today. Oh, and I thought you might want this back," she added, giving him the ring back. The boy grinned a crooked smile and began following Astrid and Kyra back down to the village. They'd literally just left Raven's Point when the boy let out a cry of pain and collapsed onto the floor.

"ARGH!" he screeched, his wings coming forward automatically but not before Astrid caught sight of him shifting his weight onto his right leg.

"Are you okay?" she asked, jogging over. The rest of the Defenders of Berk, Stoick and Gobber all crowded around to help as the boy brought his wings away to reveal something that made Astrid clasp a hand to her mouth in shock.

The boy's face and hands were no longer completely covered in pearly green scales. Instead, they were merely dotted with them in a similar way to Kyra when she was on the verge of entering the Shifter State. Replacing the majority of the scales was human skin â€" freckled human skin. But it wasn't just that which made Astrid almost scream â€" it was the boy's left leg.

It had been replaced with a spring-loaded prosthetic.

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"Oww..." Hiccup whimpered as his left leg returned. The sudden transformation of the limb hadn't been expected so putting weight on his left leg had caused him a lot of pain, just as it had done when he'd taken his first steps on the thing almost four years ago. It was so painful in fact that his attention was completely focused on getting rid of the pain and he barely noticed the fact that his scales were now almost completely gone save for a handful here and there. It was Gobber who brought him back into reality.

"Beard of Thor!" the man exclaimed. "It can't be...!"

"This isn't possible..." Stoick muttered. Hiccup glanced up and saw the shock and recognition in his dad's face. He guessed they'd finally figured it out (well, it was about time). "Son?"

"Hey, Dad," Hiccup mumbled worriedly. The Defenders of Berk, save Kyra, couldn't hide a gasp of surprise as they finally realised who the humanoid dragon that had been living with them for a week actually was. Kyra walked over and gently helped her brother to his feet, muttering a small "_Took them long enough_" before Hiccup's emerald green gaze met the storm blue one of Astrid, who could only seem to stare in utter disbelief. Her suspicions had been confirmed.

"It...it really was you all along," she breathed. Hiccup rubbed the back on his neck nervously, avoiding eye contact until Astrid turned his head so that their gazes locked. So she had guessed after all - she just needed to be sure. "Hiccup..."

"Astrid..." Hiccup gulped as Astrid's hand held his cheek gently and her face came closer to his.

13. 13: Questions over Dinner

****Chapter Thirteen: Questions over Dinner****

"It...it really was you all along..." she breathed. Hiccup rubbed the back on his neck nervously, avoiding eye contact until Astrid turned his head so that their gazes locked. So she had guessed. "Hiccup..."

"Astrid..." Hiccup gulped as Astrid's hand held his cheek gently and her face came closer to his.

SMACK!

"OWW!" Hiccup cried, reeling to the side due to the sheer force of the slap. His cheek smarted, glowed bright red where Astrid's hand had come into contact with it and stung like no one's business. Hiccup was pretty sure he would be feeling that for the rest of the day, if not the following day as well. "_WHY_ WOULD YOU DO THAT?!" he yelled.

"That's for worrying me sick for three years," Astrid replied bluntly. Hiccup glared at her.

"Of all the welcomes you could've given me, you slap me?!" he

snapped. Kyra stood by, her arms crossed in an '_I told you so_' fashion.

"I told you he wouldn't appreciate it," she said, aiming the statement at Astrid who simply ignored her best friend and continued glaring at Hiccup.

"Exactly!" the boy snapped, rubbing his still smarting cheek. "Do you even realise how much that hurts? Because I really..." Hiccup was cut off as Astrid suddenly pulled him into a kiss that had waited far too long to be had. Within seconds, Hiccup's mild anger at receiving a less-than-warm welcome from his fiancée vanished and he kissed Astrid back. As always, she was the one who started it and was the one to end it as well. "...really missed you," Hiccup finished instead, beaming from ear to ear.

"Why didn't you just tell me, Hatchet-Head?" Astrid scolded although even she couldn't stop a smile spreading all over her face.

"Like we said â€" we couldn't," Kyra repeated for what felt like the billionth time, rolling her eyes.

"Said who?" Snotlout cut in.

"Uh...Odin did...actually," Hiccup grimaced at his cousin's question. As expected, eyebrows were raised.

"You expect us to believe that?" Tuffnut asked sarcastically.

"As in, _seriously_ expect us to believe that?" Ruffnut added.

"I mean, Gobber claims about Thor coming and helping him out was crazy enough but..." Fishlegs started until Kyra interrupted.

"Oh, it happens," she confirmed. "More than you think."

Given that Kyra was practically a demigod everyone's future arguments on the matter were made invalid.

/\

Hiccup was relieved to be sleeping elsewhere other than the Cove. As soon as they'd arrived back at the village, his father had insisted on him coming home with him and Kyra, much to Toothless' and Hiccup's delight. True, the still existing wings and tail made sleeping in the wooden bed a little awkward, especially given that Hiccup had just started to get used to sleeping on the floor with them, but Hiccup was too happy to care. One of the first things he did when he got home was get rid of his old tunic and fling on a new one as soon as he could along with a new pair of leggings and a boot.

"Never been so relieved to have a boot on, huh?" Kyra joked when she came up to see her brother later. She couldn't be happier with his sudden progress, despite the means in which it came about â€" now that there were only the wings, tail and a few other scales on Hiccup to worry about, he looked relatively normal. Heck, he didn't look much different to Kyra when she used to do her half-dragon transformations. Speaking of which, she missed those.

"Tell me about it," Hiccup grinned, flopping onto his bed. Even

though it was made of hard wood, it felt more comfortable than anything else Hiccup had slept on in the past three years.. "Gods, though â€" I am gonna be stinking of seaweed for a month."

"You realise you already have for the past week?" Kyra pointed out in the same dry tone her brother often used. Despite their differing accents (Kyra spoke differently to the other teens on Berk mostly due to her living in the other world for most of her life**1**), anyone could tell Hiccup and Kyra were siblings just by listening to them. They both had the same sarcastic tone to their voices every now and then and both could barely stop themselves coming out with witty comments in the nervous, dry-humour tone Hiccup had always been known for. She sat down at her brother's desk as she often did when she spoke to him. "Just one more test to finish now, huh?"

"More like one and a half, I'd say," Hiccup groaned. "I mean, I've botched the Identity one a good couple of times now, haven't I?"

"Yeah, well, I'd say that one's on-going," Kyra shrugged. "It should be a bit easier now, though, shouldn't it? Given that you're...this, now," she mentioned. Hiccup glared cynically at her.

"You just gestured to all of me," he pointed out sarcastically, a slight grin creeping onto his face again. In retaliation, Kyra threw a charcoal pencil at his head. "Ow! What is it with people hurting me today?"

"You really should've expected it earlier," Kyra grinned. "It's Astrid we're talking about after all." She paused and smirked. "Not to mention we're trying to get you out of your habit of nearly dying at least once every adventure."

"Oh, come on! How many times has that even happened?"

"Fourteen."

"You've counted?!"

/\

Astrid and the teens were already in the Great Hall by the time Kyra and Hiccup showed up. All of them were keen to catch up with Hiccup on where he'd been for the past three years and why he hadn't returned until now. In addition to this, the Meatheads were joining the Hooligans for dinner so that Mugdug and Stoick could discuss the arranged marriage between Kyra and Artair, which meant Artair would be joining the Defenders of Berk on their table.

"So...you and Kyra sure seem to be getting along, huh?" Fishlegs noted to Artair.

"Uh...yeah," the guy replied. "I guess...might be a rare case of a marriage like this working out."

"She did tell you about what happens when she goes crazy, right?" Ruffnut asked, leaning in flirtatiously. Artair was grateful that Tuffnut and Astrid stepped in to give the girl a clonk on the head with the nearest plate.

"Yes, she did," Artair replied calmly. "I think most people know about the legendary Dragon Shifter being the daughter of Stoick the Vast this time." Astrid wondered if Kyra had shown him her eye yet but decided not to mention it in case she hadn't. "Say, Astrid â€" you're engaged to Hiccup, right?"

"It's been a _long_ engagement â€" Hiccup's lucky she's still willing to...OW" Snotlout yelled â€" Astrid punched him.

"You shut it," she glared before facing Artair. "Yeah â€" it's been a while since we were hand-fastened and he officially proposed but...I don't think I'd be happier," she smiled. Artair grinned.

"Well, then â€" here's to us," he toasted. All the teens joined in the toast when Kyra and Hiccup finally showed up. "What took you guys so long?"

"It's been a long day," Hiccup shrugged as Astrid scooted along the bench to give him room. Kyra sat down opposite him next to Artair.

"Yeah â€" I don't think I've seen you nap that long," she grinned. Hiccup made a face at her â€" Kyra was one to talk given her tendency to lie in past midday when it suited her.

"So, when's it all gonna happen?" Ruffnut cut across, having recovered from her brief concussion.

"What?" Hiccup asked, his eyes narrowing.

"What else would she be talking about, idiot?" Tuffnut scoffed. "You guys?"

"I still don't follow."

"You see? You never make anything clear!" Tuffnut scolded his sister.

"Well, you didn't do any better, did ya?"

"You saying that I can't explain things?"

"You saying that _I_ can't explain things?"

"Maybe I am!"

"At least I can..."

"SHUT UP!" the other teens chorused. Honest to the gods â€" the twins picked the most inconvenient times to argue. Once it had gotten so bad Hiccup had actually rammed a plate onto Tuffnut's head and thrown his drink at him (Kyra couldn't help but smile at the memory). Fishlegs turned back to the two couples.

"I think they were trying to ask when you guys were gonna actually get married," he put simply. "I mean, do you think it could be a double wedding or something?"

"Fishlegs, I'm still not entirely decided," Kyra muttered. Hiccup

could see that she'd flushed even in the orange light of the fire. It seemed that despite indications that she clearly liked Artair, marriage was still something she had mixed feelings about. Artair glanced at her with a look of confusion. "Artair â€" I just want to be sure it's going to work out, if that's okay," she explained. "I don't want to marry someone who's like a stranger."

"I'm not like that, am I?" Artair asked nervously.

"Of course not!" Kyra protested. "I just...wanted to be sure we would get along." Artair nodded his understanding â€" he'd had similar feelings before he met Kyra officially for the first time. "At any rate, I think it would be best for these two lovebirds to get married first," Kyra added teasingly (there was still a nervous tone to her voice which didn't go unnoticed), indicating Hiccup and Astrid who both blushed furiously even in the orange light of the fire in the Great Hall. "They've waited long enough." Hiccup swore to the gods...

"Well...uh..." he stammered, glancing at Astrid. "Astrid â€" you...uh...always said you...wanted a Spring wedding, didn't you?" he asked worriedly, his voice rising to the slightly higher pitch it normally went to when he was nervous or was trying to sound normal but completely failed.

"Umm...did I?" Astrid frowned. Hiccup kicked her under the table. "OW...oh, right. Yeah, I...guess I might've mentioned it," she grimaced, giving Hiccup a '_You are dead meat_' look. Kyra's face lit up.

"Perfect!" she smiled. "I'll let Dad know later."

"What about you two?" Snotlout asked, pointing at Kyra and Artair with his spoon. "I mean, this is an arranged marriage after all. It's not like you've actually got a...OW!" he cried when Kyra landed a well-aimed kick on him under the table. Gods, he was tactless.

"I wouldn't mind a Summer wedding, personally," Artair muttered next to Kyra. "Break from the usual Fall wedding. What do you think?" Kyra's face softened as she thought about it.

"Sounds okay to me...if it happened," she admitted, adding the last bit in an undertone that only Hiccup could hear. Hiccup smiled â€" summer, with its never-ending sunlight and dragons as far as the eye could see on Berk, was Kyra's favourite season. A summer wedding would be perfect for her. He noticed that the left side of her face was still purposefully covered by her dark auburn hair which seemed to shine bright red in the firelight. He decided to break one of his rules for a second to ask her about it.

"**_Are you ever gonna show him?_**" he asked. Kyra's face fell when she heard the question.

"**_You try finding a way to show someone your dragon eye without it coming across as weird or scary,_**" she groaned.

"**_He's gonna see it sooner or later. You might as well tell him about it at least â€" it takes a while for people to get used to it._**"

"**_Thanks for the encouragement,_**" Kyra huffed sarcastically.
"**_You're coming up with the conversation starter._**" Well, bugger it all.

"Well..." Hiccup started talking, absent-mindedly prodding his roast chicken. It was nice to have something other than fish for a change. "We've come...a long way from when Kyra first got back, haven't we?" he grimaced. Kyra gave him a look that said '_That's the best you could come up with?_'. Thankfully the others bought it.

"You're right," Astrid admitted. "I mean, it's good to see some things haven't changed," she added, casting a cynical glance at the twins and Snotlout. "But, still â€" three and a half years is a long time."

"Remember when Kyra first used her Dragon Shifter powers? As in her Shifter State ones?" Fishlegs added excitedly. Kyra slumped.

"Thanks, Fishlegs â€" I'd almost forgotten that," she groaned, burying her head in her arms.

"What? What happened the first time?" Artair asked, his interest now piqued.

"Long story short â€" middle of a battle with the Outcasts, we were having trouble, Kyra lets loose this song or whatever..." Snotlout rambled.

"It's the Song of the Adriatic," Kyra subconsciously corrected her cousin.

"Like I said, whatever...then she comes in as a Night Fury before going completely Berserker style on the Outcasts with her marks all glowing and stuff," Snotlout finished. Kyra glared at him.

"When I get my powers back you are going to be on the receiving end of a fireball, you know that?" she hissed. To make her job a little easier, Hiccup placed a finger on either side of his lips and let out a shrill whistle. Snotlout recognised the signal and tried to run but a green and red Terrible Terror crashed into his face before he had time to react. Hiccup chuckled â€" he'd missed Camicaze more than he'd realised. "Cheers, Hiccup," Kyra winked, a smile returning to her face. Hiccup winked back.

"Wow...you never told me about that," Artair breathed in amazement. Kyra's face fell again.

"Mostly because it's not something I want to remember," she sighed. "What happened afterwards wasn't exactly the best of events." Hiccup sighed in sadness at the memory as Kyra explained that Stoick had handed her over to the Outcasts, not knowing she was his daughter at the time, for fear that she could turn against the whole village if she went into that state again. Hiccup and the teens had gone to rescue her and had succeeded â€" that had been the first time she'd flown without her staff when she learnt she could sprout wings â€" but the Outcasts had gone back to Berk in retaliation.

"But you guys came back and fended them off, right? Artair pointed out. "The Meatheads haven't heard a word from Alvin and the Outcasts

since then â€" we heard everything." Kyra's hand rose to her face.

"Not everything," she muttered. Hiccup felt slightly relieved but at the same time sorry â€" Kyra knew she would have to tell Artair about her eye and how it came to be like that sooner or later but he knew how hard it was to explain an injury like that. Artair asked what happened. Astrid stepped in.

"Well, it was during the battle that Hiccup admitted his feelings," she smirked (Hiccup blushed again â€" him and his big mouth. He was starting to see why people kept calling him a useless romantic). "Stoick hand-fasted us...but then Alvin tried taking Kyra."

"You went after her, though?" Artair noted.

"No, duh!" one of the twins scoffed. A yelp of pain could have been heard outside as Kyra asked Barf-Belch to whip both twins on the back of the head with their tails.

"Yeah, we went after her and...well, I fell off the rope bridge over Loki's Gorge," Hiccup admitted, rubbing the back of his neck again.

"Idiot..." Astrid muttered. Hiccup mentioned for Kyra to continue.

"I leapt down after him â€" that was my first complete controlled transformation," she explained. "I managed to catch Hiccup but then..." she paused. Artair pressed her gently. "Hiccup tried to warn me but...I didn't react in time."

"**_You're stalling._**"

"**_Shut up!_**" Kyra snapped at Hiccup quickly. Slowly, she brushed the auburn hair covering the left side of her face away but avoided eye contact with Artair. "Alvin had a crossbow or something..."

"It was a crossbow," Astrid confirmed. Kyra hissed at her to shut up as well.

"And...well..." she muttered. Dammit, what was it with her and Hiccup always making things sound forced? It wasn't as if what she was about to say was easy. Thankfully Artair caught what was going on.

"You got hit, didn't you?" he asked quietly. The explanation had caused all of the teens to fall silent â€" even the twins had ceased to argue! Kyra nodded, still avoiding eye contact. "Where did it hit?" Artair asked. It was then that Kyra turned to face him and he saw it â€" the circle of bright green with a slit of black for a pupil. No scar remained from the arrow that had hit her there three and a half years ago, her dragon healing made sure of that, but the eye was reminder enough of what had happened.. Artair couldn't speak â€" it was Kyra who broke the silence.

"I..I didn't want to show you before," she sighed. "It's not really something you show to a..." she cut herself off but Artair finished the sentence.

"A total stranger," he understood. He'd tried to sound neutral but the

hurt he had felt was clear as crystal in his voice. "Why didn't you show me the time after?" Kyra stayed silent and looked at her brother who indicated for the pair to leave the Hall if they wished. Kyra stood up and left, closely followed by Artair. Once outside, he repeated the question.

"I just...I...urgh! How do I say this?" Kyra struggled to put what she wanted to say into words. She was on an emotional rollercoaster â€" she had only known Artair for a week at most, why should her heart be skipping beats every time she heard his name? Why should she want the next time she saw him to be closer every time? Why should her face feel warm every time someone asked her how she felt about him? Why should her breathing quicken every time she thought of him?

"Kyra, I know you want to know who I am before we get married but how can I know who you are if you won't let me?" Artair cut across when Kyra didn't answer.

"How do we know if we're even going to get married?" Kyra hissed, the words clearly struggling to come out.

"I hate to say it, Kyra, but Snotlout's right," Artair retorted. "When it comes to arranged marriages, the people involved don't really have a choice. I know Hiccup and Astrid were able to choose and I understand this wasn't normal in your other world..."

"It wasn't my world," Kyra growled distastefully.

"It doesn't matter!" Artair snapped. "What I'm saying is that one way or another, you're gonna get married off to someone who you wouldn't have known as long as your friends here. Now I'll ask again: if you don't want me to be a stranger to you then why did you keep something I'll see anyway from me?" Kyra couldn't keep it in anymore.

"I didn't want to frighten you away, alright?!" she squeaked before clasping her hands over her mouth. Artair's eyes narrowed in a questioning manner. "I'm sorry, Artair...I just..." Kyra sighed. "I wanted to see you again. I was scared that...if you knew I had this," she grimaced, indicating her eye. "You'd be scared of me," she finished. Artair came close and placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Kyra, you told me everything about your life in that other world and what happens to you when you get angry," he pointed out. "If anything, your stories about your Shifter State should've frightened me more than that," he noted, nodding at Kyra's eye. "Yet I listened and I wanted to see you again. Kyra, I want this to work as much as you do â€" my whole family's pretty much grown from arranged marriages and I don't want mine to end up like some of my sisters."

"I'm sorry..." Kyra sniffed. Thor, dammit. Why do I have to get like this around him?_ "I really am...I just...I don't know what to do anymore." She was cut off as Artair pulled her into a hug. For comforts' sake, she hugged him back. Artair then broke the hug and his hazel eyes locked gazes with Kyra's.

"If you're not gonna let me in, how do I know I can trust you?" he whispered. Kyra broke eye contact and gently pushed Artair away.

Maybe she wasn't ready for this...maybe this wasn't right.

"You don't," she replied simply.

Without another word, she turned away from him and headed towards Thor's Beach to be alone.

* * *

><p>AN: Yes, I actually counted how many near-death experiences Hiccup has had â€" the number I've got down in this story includes the one he had in the prequel to this story, *_How to Speak Dragonese_**** as well as his 'almost-being-executed-stint' from the previous chapter. Not including those two, I've counted twelve although I'm pretty sure I've missed some, knowing Hiccup. Also, as far as I can tell, he's been captured / almost captured a total of three times so far.**

1 **Whereas the teens of Berk speak with an American accent like they do in the film, Kyra speaks with a British accent as she spent twelve years of her life living in 21****st**** century England (see ****_How to Speak Dragonese_**** for more details) so it kind of rubbed off on her.**

14. 14: The Heart's Decision

Chapter Fourteen: The Heart's Decision

In the seas that lay in the horizon from Berk, a passing merchants' ship suddenly shot beneath the waves. The water was boiling in a way unseen or heard of before and it wasn't long before scattered remains of the ship and its cargo rose to the surface. No bodies ever emerged from the boiling sea â€" the scorn of the dragons that lay below the waves had meant they would have had no chance of ever seeing the skies again.

The Weedsnakes knew that Hiccup had been close to killing his sister whilst at the mercy of his dragon instincts, just as planned, and had been enraged when they discovered that somehow he'd been snapped out of this state of mind and was now closer to regaining his humanity than ever before. To make matters worse for them, the Darkwing had paid them a visit to ask why the Dragon Shifter still existed.

"**You were certain that wretched necklace would do the trick!**" a Weedsnake roared at the head of the meeting. "**You gave us your word that it would cause him to give in completely so that he would rid us of that blasted girl!**"

"**I said it would work â€" which it did,**" the elder Weedsnake hissed back. It was Wavewing â€" he knew that the necklace had been quite possibly their last shot at getting Hiccup to fulfil the warning of the dragons. The warning of the Gods' War. Now that Hiccup was back to his senses and more human than dragon, there was no way he'd trust Wavewing anymore â€"after all, he'd been the one to give him the necklace under the pretence of helping him rather than leading the Weedsnakes operations. "**I did not, however, foresee that the others would have been able to overpower him.**" He growled in disdain. "**The humans' gods are smarter than we previously

realised. They found a way for the Limbless to regain his original form without fulfilling the conditions of the curse.**" A snarl sounded nearby.

"**Those pitiful gods...**" It was the Darkwing. "**Thinking they can interfere with our business...**"

"**You make a fair point, Your Excellence,**" Wavewing noted respectfully, bowing his head to the Darkwing. "**But is there not still hope of your power keeping hold of the boy? As long as there is even the smallest amount of dragon in him, he will still have the same instincts as us.**" The Darkwing nodded his understanding.

"**You are right,**" he growled. "**But his human mind is now dominant â€" it will be hard to get his dragon mind to comply.**" The Weedsnakes cackled in response. As long as Hiccup's dragon instinct was what was leading him to kill his sister, it didn't matter if his human mind knew what he was doing. It would be the dragon part of him, not the human part, completing the deed, allowing Lohikäärme to be reborn and the Gods' War to start anew, hopefully ending with the dragons prevailing and the human world being wiped off the face of the earth.

"**Even so, we have full confidence in your powers...Ivor,**" Wavewing sneered. The Darkwing's eyes closed at the memory â€" it had been this beast that the God of Spirit, Ivor, had turned into as a result of his blind rage towards his sister. For too long he'd been trapped in this form. For too long he'd searched for the Dragon Shifter and brother who could fulfil his wishes. For too long he had awaited for the right time and opportunity for his sister to return.

"**And I have full confidence in your loyalty, Wavewing,**" he replied, darkly and well as sincerely. "**However, don't think I will let this incident go unnoticed. You lost the boy's trust today â€" there will be no other way to bring about the dragons' dominance of this world no without force.**" He paused. "**They will fight. These Vikings on Berk â€" they are unlike any I've ever seen before. Their spirit is...uncannily strong.**"

"**But their hearts remain weak!**" a young Weedsnake hissed gleefully. "**And their gods' powers can hardly hope to exceed your own, Your Reverence. They barely stand a chance.**" The Darkwing...Ivor...smiled evilly at the young one's faith in him. It had been something that had drawn him to ally with the Weedsnakes in the first Gods' War and it was what had kept them by his side for centuries.

"**The boy may be close to cheating my curse...**" he snarled. "**But I'll make sure that it is only broken by the means in which I set it.**"

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"AH!" Hiccup cried, falling out of bed as he woke with a start. Toothless trotted over and helped the guy to his feet but Hiccup was damp with cold sweat. He'd had a dream â€" one of the Weedsnakes and the Darkwing. They'd planned to use him to kill Kyra from the start â€" even Wavewing, the one Weedsnake he'd trusted until a couple of

days ago, was in on the act. Apparently if he killed Kyra it would bring the dragons' Goddess back rather than continue the cycle of the Dragon Shifter (how he wasn't sure, he'd ask Kyra later) and also reignite something called the Gods' War. Hiccup remembered Kyra mentioning it before after she'd gotten back from the library. If what he'd seen in his nightmare was true, Lohikäärme's return would not only restart the war but wipe out the human world.

"**Are you okay?**" Toothless grumbled worriedly.

"I'm fine," Hiccup muttered less than convincingly. Toothless nudged him, pressing for the truth. "What do you know about the Gods' War?" Hiccup asked slowly. Toothless cringed and growled in distaste.

"**It happened millennia ago,**" he replied hatefully. "**Long before I was a hatchling. But I do know the warning that came from it.**"

"That your Goddess' return to her divine form will restart it?" Hiccup quizzed. Toothless assumed Kyra had told him so let it go.

"**Yes â€" but it will also mean the end of either your world or mine,**" he replied mournfully. "**That's why many dragons left Ivor's side after he sought to revive his sister. The balance between our worlds was his to protect and now he seeks to destroy it once again...all to get his sister back,**" he explained sadly. Hiccup frowned.

"Why would they take such a risk?" he wondered aloud. "Why would they put everything to chance?" Toothless asked him what he meant. "Those Weedsnakes â€" they're in cohorts with...him," he explained.

"**Ivor?**"

"Yeah â€" he's...he's the High Diving Darkwing," Hiccup added, shock still plastering his face. Toothless' eye widened and his pupils narrowed in surprise.

"**That thing?**" he spluttered in Dragonese. "**Okay, I knew his hatred had turned him into a monster but...that thing?**"

"Looks like it," Hiccup grimaced. "Anyway, it sounded like they were using me from the start. They wanted me to..." he couldn't bring himself to say it. Toothless nodded his understanding. "...all so that they could bring Lohikäärme back and restart the Gods' War." He paused for a moment, scratching at an irritating scale that still stuck to his skin. "They want to get rid of us..." he mumbled. Toothless' eyes went even wider if that was possible.

"**How could they...?**" he muttered. The conversation was interrupted when Stoick called from downstairs. "**I'll wait outside â€" you go see what your dad wants.**" Hiccup nodded as his best friend jumped out of the window to wait for him outside. In the meantime, Hiccup grabbed his boot, pulled it onto his right foot and trudged downstairs where his father was pacing up and down in worry.

"Morning exercise?" Hiccup joked nervously. "Don't you usually head out with Thornado at this time?" Stoick looked at his son, clearly not in the mood for jokes. It was then that Hiccup noticed something. "Say, where's Kyra? She go out early or something?"

"That's what I was hoping you would know, son," Stoick replied. Hiccup frowned. It suddenly occurred to him that he hadn't seen Kyra since she'd left the Great Hall the previous evening with Artair. "She's been missing all night and Mugdug and I were hoping to make the engagement official for her and Artair today." Hiccup realised where the problem arose.

"And you can't do so without both betrothed being present," he remembered from his chief training. "Have the search parties been sent out?" he asked.

"I sent them out about an hour ago," Stoick answered. "But you know your sister better than anyone â€" who knows where she is?" Hiccup bit his lip.

"Do you want me to head out with Toothless?" he offered. "She might be with Windwalker and given that she and Toothless are mates now I reckon we'd have a better chance of finding them with him." Stoick nodded in agreement.

"Alright â€" then I want you to head out with Toothless immediately. Search the entire island and check the surrounding islands if needed, even Dragon Island if necessary. Just make sure you find her." Hiccup nodded and headed outside, wincing as his tail accidentally caught the fish basket, causing it to topple over.

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Hiccup circled all of Berk on Toothless, half searching for Kyra and half simply enjoying being able to fly Toothless again. He'd checked almost everywhere â€" the Cove, the Whispering Death tunnels (Kyra was more than capable of lifting those boulders even without her powers), Raven's Point...there was only one place on the island that he hadn't been yet: Thor's Beach. Directing Toothless towards the secluded beach, he could just about see Windwalker curled up by the cave he'd hid in before â€" he reckoned they'd found their runaway Dragon Shifter. Hiccup gently landed Toothless nearby and attracted the Star Backed Night Fury's attention.

"**What is it?**" she asked cautiously. Hiccup glanced at the cave behind her.

"Is Kyra in there?" he asked. "The entire village has been looking for her all morning." Windwalker cast a careful glance behind her.

"**She's not in the mood to talk right now,**" she explained simply. "**She'll come out when she...**" Windwalker was cut off by a whimpered sentence in Dragonese coming from within the cave.

"**Who is it?**" it said. Hiccup knew it was Kyra â€" he recognised that voice no matter what language she was using.

"**It's your brother,**" Windwalker replied gently. "**Should I...?**"

****No, it's okay. Let him in.****

Windwalker complied and let Hiccup past. He made his way into the cave where Kyra was curled up, still in her garb from the night before. She looked sad, confused and even worried. Hiccup sat down opposite her.

"You alright?" he asked carefully. "You don't usually come here unless you're really upset." Kyra sighed.

"I don't know if I can go through with this," she mumbled. Hiccup knew what she was talking about. "I don't think I'm ready..."

"What did he say when you left the Great Hall yesterday?" Hiccup quizzed. Kyra recalled her conversation with Artair. "Well, he can hardly expect to know all of your secrets, can he? I get that there's the whole believe about how couples shouldn't keep secrets from each other but there are definitely exceptions."

"It's not that, Hiccup," Kyra moaned. "Artair knows it's his duty to do this...so do I...but..." she stopped for a second. "I mean, I thought it could work â€" we were getting along so well. I just don't think I'm ready."

"Kyra," Hiccup comforted, holding his sister's hand. "There are loads of things which we don't think we're ready for. Personally, I really don't think I'm ready for chief-hood..." he grimaced. "But I've still gotta go with it. You never know if you're ready unless you..."

"What?" Kyra sniffed scornfully. "Try? Marriage isn't something you can _try_, Hiccup." Hiccup winced â€" okay, maybe that wasn't the best way to put it.

"I'm just saying that you might just be convincing yourself that you're not ready," he tried again. "Listen â€" you like Artair, don't you?" Kyra nodded slowly. "You think it might work?" Kyra hesitated but nodded again. "See? That's a start if anything." Kyra remained silent for a minute of two.

"Maybe," she sighed. "I just wish there'd been more time." Hiccup knew how she felt â€" there'd been plenty of occasions where he'd wished there had been more time. For instance, he'd wished he'd had enough time to show everyone what dragons were like during the final round of Dragon Training before Stoick had startled Hookfang.

"Why don't you at least come back to the village?" he suggested. "Talk to Dad â€" maybe he can put it off for a while if that's what you want." Kyra stared at him. "I'll vouch for you." Kyra smiled slightly and accepted her brother's help. Taking his hand, she rose to her feet and brushed the sand off her dress before heading back towards the village with Hiccup and the dragons. On the way, she turned to face her brother.

"This last test that you need to do â€" Heart, wasn't it?" she remembered. Hiccup bit his lip â€" he still had no idea how that one was going to turn out. "Any ideas?"

"Absolutely nothing," Hiccup groaned. "Right now though I think these

stupid scales are giving me more trouble than that," he huffed, scratching at a scale that was still embedded in the back of his neck.

"Leave them alone!" Kyra snapped gently. "That won't help unless you want a scar for the rest of your life." Hiccup reluctantly ceased scratching â€" he didn't really want any more scars, regardless of anything Astrid said. Before long they arrived back in the village where Stoick was waiting with Mugdug and Artair, who looked as if he'd had better days. Kyra dismounted Windwalker and avoided eye contact with him.

"There you are!" Stoick greeted in relief as Kyra walked over. "I was beginning to worry."

"Sorry, Dad," Kyra muttered blankly. She faced Hiccup and mentioned for him to leave her to it â€" she'd call if she needed him â€" before facing her father again. Hiccup didn't want to leave his sister alone when he knew how upset she was but he respected her wishes and headed back to the plaza where Astrid was waiting.

"Hey," she greeted. Hiccup jogged over, tripping over his tail just before he reached Astrid. "How close are you to getting rid of that thing?" she smirked.

"No clue," Hiccup winced, getting back onto his feet and untangling himself from his wings which were also more of a bother than anything else. The skin on his tail fins and wings were no longer dark turquoise and thick enough to fly but had gone back to their original translucent pearl-green state as they had been when Hiccup had first transformed. "Can't be too far now â€" I mean, these things changing within the day has to be good progress if anything."

"Sure is," Astrid agreed. "Still wish you coulda told me, though."

"Astrid, I've told you a hundred times â€" you had to appreciate me for who I was!" Hiccup repeated. "Not who I said I was. Would you've believed me?"

"Well, I had a hunch it was you, didn't I?" Astrid pointed out smugly. "You might be taller and less scrawny than before but there's still the element of you." Hiccup knew she had a point. "The wings, scales and tail didn't help though."

"Yeah, I can guess that they wouldn't," Hiccup nodded. He glanced over at the Meatheads, Stoick and Kyra. "She really doesn't know if she wants this..." he muttered. Astrid set her gaze of the gathering as well.

"But they seemed so good for each other," she frowned. "I wonder what happened." Hiccup kept his mouth shut â€" it was Kyra's decision if she wanted to tell Astrid and given that she'd kept his secret for so long, it was the least he could do to return the favour. "But, seriously â€" a Spring wedding?" Astrid changed the subject, aiming the comment at Hiccup.

"Oh, come on!" he huffed. "I thought I've kept you waiting long enough!"

"You have!" Astrid snapped. "Only that Spring is only a few months away."

"We still got Winter and Devastating Winter to get through, you know," Hiccup pointed out. Astrid punched him in the arm.

"And that allows us to prepare how?" she retorted. "You know we get cooped up in the Great Hall until Devastating Winter's passed â€" how the heck are we supposed to get anything ready?"

"I'm sure Kyra will think of something," Hiccup winced, rubbed his arm where Astrid had accidentally caught a scale under his sleeve. Astrid shrugged â€" it was true that Kyra was excellent at organising things with short notice and given the organisation of their engagement party, she knew she shouldn't doubt her best human friend.

"Still worried about the Trust Ceremony?" she asked teasingly, watching Stormfly chase her mate around the plaza. Hiccup didn't answer. "Hiccup? Did you hear what I just said?" she frowned, turning to face him. Her frown deepened when she saw that Hiccup was clutching his head as if he'd come down with a sudden migraine. "Hiccup?"

"Astrid..." Hiccup muttered through gritted teeth. "Get the others ready." Astrid's eyes widened â€" Hiccup's expression matched Kyra's the night the Darkwing had first shown itself perfectly.

"What's going on?" she asked worriedly. Hiccup screamed in what seemed to be pain, wrenching himself away from Astrid. After a few short seconds his condition seemed to improve but it had still attracted Kyra's attention as she came running over.

"Hiccup?" she breathed. "Astrid â€" what's happening?" she asked nervously. Hiccup shook his head clear and his emerald gaze fixated upon the bay. Kyra glanced over and spotted the boiling sea â€" even without her magic she could sense the power radiating from the waters. She understood immediately. "I'll get the others." She jogged off, leaving Astrid with her fianc e.

"Hiccup â€" what is it?" Astrid pressed, her teeth grinding against each other in fear. Hiccup, with a hand still clasped to his head, face her with fear written all over his freckled face.

"They're coming."

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Wavewing had tried to reach Hiccup through his still existing dragon mind but the boy was stronger than he thought. The distance was too great for this to occur from afar so Wavewing led the Weedsnakes closer to Berk, their twilight blue scales shimmering in the shallower water and the constant movement of scores of sea dragons causing the sea above them to boil. As they neared the bay, Ivor â€" the Darkwing â€" slipped silently through the waves alongside them, taking up the lead position alongside Wavewing, ready for the battle to come.

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On land the Defenders of Berk sat perched on their dragons, crossbows at the ready, whilst the villagers had gotten the catapults and other weapons in the arsenal ready. Hiccup had insisted on remaining with the others despite Stoick's orders for him to get to some place safe. He wanted to get his own back at the Weedsnakes for what they'd done to him, especially Wavewing, a dragon he'd trusted with helping him.

Beside him stood Astrid and Kyra who apparently had spoken to her father about the problems she was facing with the arranged marriage but seemed calmer now " Hiccup decided to ask her about it later. The Defenders of Berk waited nearby as the Hooligan and the Meathead tribe stood waiting for the foe to surface.

"You sure it's them?" Kyra asked Hiccup calmly. Hiccup nodded slowly.

"I don't think there're any other dragons out there looking for me," he muttered angrily. He turned to face Snotlout. "You guys get the oak bolts like I said?"

"Sure," Snotlout nodded, holding up his crossbow which was loaded with iron-tipped oak bolts. "But why do we need those?"

"Just aim for the mouth when they open them," Hiccup ordered. "Trust me." He looked at Fishlegs. "You sure it'll be enough?" he asked.

"I hope so " if one doesn't work then I guess we just unload all the bolts we can," Fishlegs replied nervously. Hiccup gulped " oak bolts were really their only chance at winning this thing. Unless the villagers managed to get some oak stakes or something the tiny customised crossbow bolts would have to do.

"Permission to shoot first ask questions later?" Ruffnut grinned.

"Permission to skip the questions?" Tuffnut cut in. Hiccup grinned slyly back.

"Permission granted," he smirked. "Feel free to blow up any Weedsnake you want." The twins high-fived. It had been the first time in a while that they'd actually be given permission to do anything destructive so they were taking advantage of it. Hiccup turned back to face the bay as the Darkwing...no, Ivor...burst from the waves and glared down at the village, his blood-red eye (the other one having been scared by Hiccup's attack three years previously) burning down upon the Vikings. He was shortly followed by the school of Weedsnakes at the head of which was Wavewing. Hiccup's face twisted into one of hate but he kept his anger under control.

"So those are Weedsnakes," Astrid muttered. The creatures looked surprisingly majestic, with their twilight blue scales and serpentine appearance " there was something about them that made her understand why Hiccup had trusted them. She suddenly found herself reluctant to fight them but she snapped herself out of it when she reminded herself of what they did to Hiccup. She shifted her gaze to Hiccup whose face had set into an expression of stern focus " she could tell there was a conversation going on so she waited.

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"**_Why did you fight back, Little One?_**" Wavewing coaxed.
"**_Might I remind you the conditions of the curse set upon you? 'Fly by your own strength until the imposter is removed'?_**" he recited word for word. Hiccup bristled.

"**_I'd rather die than hurt Kyra,_**" he growled back. He'd let himself slip into the telepathic communication mind-stream for a moment. He had to know what Wavewing really wanted.

"**_Even so â€" you were better off with us, were you not?_**" Wavewing asked. Hiccup hissed audibly. "**_Think of what you had to do to be accepted in your village. Think of how they treated you before you befriended that black lizard of yours._**" Toothless was listening in and grumbled a curse in Dragonese. "**_You sacrificed so much just to get their approval. You never had to do any of that with us._**"

"**_Oh, except for the fact the others called me a Halfling among other names,_**" Hiccup pointed out disdainfully. "**_Don't even think I'll consider going back to you â€" I'm not your puppet._**" Wavewing and Ivor both growled with a noise that rivalled Thor's thunder. "**_I'll repeat what Kyra said before â€" if we're going down we're dragging you to Helheim with us._**" Kyra sagged next to him â€" she'd prefer not to.

"**_Very well,_**" Wavewing hissed. "**_If that is going to be the case so be it. It's a shame â€" you made such a good dragon, Hiccup._**" With that, he and the Weedsnakes vanished beneath the waves again although the Darkwing remained blocking the village's view of the horizon. Hiccup closed off his telepathic mind-stream and faced his dad.

"I don't know when they're gonna make the first move," he grimaced. "But I'd say keep an eye...ARGH!" he suddenly yelped, his hands shooting to his temple. Kyra's eyes widened in fear â€" something clearly wasn't right. She looked at the Darkwing and saw that his gaze was fixated on Hiccup.

"Hiccup!" Astrid cried, leaping off Stormfly to help but Hiccup pushed everyone who came close back. Kyra could see the pearl-green scales gradually spreading but most that did seemed to fall off seconds later. "What's happening?" Astrid asked.

"He's fighting it," Kyra realised. The Darkwing was trying to unleash Hiccup's dragon instincts but Hiccup was using every ounce of strength that he had to fight back. She struggled to break into the telepathic communication mind-set but she eventually broke through the interference and could just about catch what the Darkwing was saying, albeit it was still fuzzy.

"**_Give in!_**" it hissed. "**_The human heart...weak...shall never..._**"

"GET OUT OF MY HEAD!" Hiccup shrieked but Kyra could tell he was struggling. Hiccup painfully forced himself to look at Kyra â€" he couldn't fight back much longer. "Kyra â€" run."

Kyra didn't need telling twice as she took off through the village as

Hiccup finally lost the struggle to stop the Darkwing from unlocking his instincts. Astrid instantly side-charged him but she was confused to find that it was a lot easier this time â€" Hiccup wasn't putting up much of a physical fight. Even so, he gathered the strength to break through the lock Astrid held him in and take after Kyra but not before Astrid had spotted something â€" his eyes weren't blood red as they had been before. Instead they were still a vivid forest green, merely lined with red.

He was still battling for control.

"He's still fighting back!" she yelled at the villagers. "Don't hurt him!"

Kyra was still pelting through the village but the Weedsnakes had chosen that particular moment to start the battle, distracting the villagers from helping her and making her escape far more challenging. She rounded a corner by the Academy and ran straight into one â€" without thinking, she held up her crossbow and shot a bolt straight into the thing's mouth. She ran on before she saw anything else but the shrieks informed her she wanted to do anything but look.

Another Weedsnake caught her by surprise and she was knocked to the ground as Windwalker leapt in to protect her rider. However, it gave Hiccup a chance to catch up but Kyra noticed something odd â€" unlike last time, where Hiccup let nothing stand in his way of getting to Kyra and had no idea what he was doing, the boy appeared to be wrestling with himself. Every step looked as if it was being forced and Hiccup was even trying to hold his own hand back. His human side was struggling for control with his dragon side â€" although the human part had been largely dominant for the last few days, the dragon part of Hiccup was still strong under the control of the Darkwing.

"Kyra! Keep running!" Hiccup yelled, although the words sounded forced out as if he was struggling to string two words together. Even so, Kyra obeyed and made a beeline for Windwalker â€" Hiccup couldn't follow her into the sky with his wings in the form they were in now so she would be safer up there than she was on the ground. Dodging a barrage of Weedsnake attacks, she leapt onto Windwalker's back and took to the sky, heading straight for the Darkwing. If she could at least distract him Hiccup might stand a chance.

"Hey! One-Eye!" she yelled, clasp ing her silver dagger in her right hand. The Darkwing turned in her direction, although its focus was still very much on Hiccup and maintaining control of the dragon instincts he had left. "How about I get your face more symmetrical?" she jeered, swiping up at the dragon's other eye. It screeched in pain and for a moment Kyra thought she had it but glancing back at the ground Hiccup was still trying to find a way to get up into the air and still struggling with himself. The Darkwing cackled and sneered in Dragonese.

"**You think you can escape your fate?**" it jeered at her. "**You think you can cheat the curse I laid upon you millennia ago?**" Realisation hit Kyra â€" her suspicions had been right.

"You're..." she stammered.

"**Yes. I am what is left of Ivor, the God of Spirits and rightful ruler of the dragon world!**" Ivor roared, taking a snap at Kyra who deftly flew Windwalker out of the way before they got hurt. "**And you, ****_dear sister, _****had better say your prayers.**" He glanced at the village. "**It's a pitiful shame, really â€" that you should have been reduced to walk among such creatures.**"

"THAT'S MY FAMILY YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!" Kyra shrieked, as Windwalker blasted Ivor's neck with a bright blue fireball. "And if you hadn't lost it none of this would ever have happened!"

"**Indeed. You would have been taken by the Outcasts when you were a child,**" Ivor growled threateningly. Kyra stopped in her tracks.

"What?" she gasped.

"**The Dragon Shifter may always be doomed to share my sister's fate,**" Ivor hissed, with a hint of remorse echoing in his voice. "**But I wasn't about to let you fall into the hands of mortals even worse than these!**" Kyra was barely listening. Hiccup had told her about his nightmares about the night she vanished. Her marks had started glowing and before anyone knew it she was gone. All this time she'd thought it had been a Dragon Shifter defence mechanism...

"You...sent me to the other world?" she blinked. Ivor growled irritably. "You were watching out for me?" A glimmer of hope rose in Kyra's chest â€" if Ivor had cared enough about her to save from the Outcasts when she was just a baby, maybe he wasn't the mindless monster he'd been rumoured to be.

"**Save your revelations for later!**" Ivor roared, taking a swipe at Windwalker. He barely missed but the down draft caused by the attack was enough to send Kyra and Windwalker tumbling to the ground where her dagger fell out of her hands and into Hiccup's reach. "**Finish this, boy!**" Ivor bellowed. Hiccup was still fighting and tried to stop himself from picking up the blade â€" his hesitation gave Kyra time to run (Windwalker had twisted her wing upon landing and could no longer fly) and she pelted towards the forest â€" there, at least, if Weedsnakes followed her she had a chance of tricking them into biting an oak tree. However, she was caught up before was able to get there by the largest Weedsnake.

"Wavewing," Kyra realised, adopting a fighting stance even though she'd long lost her crossbow and her dagger was in Hiccup's hands. Wavewing appeared to examine her for a moment before speaking.

"**He spoke so highly of you,**" he commented cruelly. "**Such a terrible twist of fate that the warning set by the dragons should come to light with you two.**"

"He would never," Kyra insisted. "You tried once and you failed. Give it up already!"

"**I shall not answer to such a weakling!**" Wavewing hissed. "**I answer to my gods and my gods alone!**" With that declaration his tail shot forwards and struck Kyra in the side, winding her and sending her flying into the side of her house. Wavewing then proceeded to grab Hiccup and placed him within five feet of the out

of breath Kyra whilst Ivor forced him to raise the silver dagger above his head. Hiccup was still aware of what was going on and used his other hand to prevent the one holding the knife from coming down. Wavewing created a wall around the pair, cutting off Kyra's escape routes and stopping anyone else from helping her. Kyra shook herself back into focus and shuffled as far back against the wall of her home as she could when she saw Hiccup towering over her, his face scrunched in concentration as he tried not to give in.

"Hiccup..." she mumbled fearfully.

"Kyra...I can't...they're too strong..." Hiccup grumbled back, his teeth audibly grinding together as he wrestled with himself. Kyra knew she had one shot of helping Hiccup â€" she had to try.

"But your heart is stronger!" she reminded him. Hiccup's gaze locked with hers. "I know...because you're you." She closed her eyes, waiting for the final blow.

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Hiccup couldn't fight for much longer. Pretty soon he would have to bring the knife down â€" everything he'd tried to do would be for nothing.

"**That's it, Little One,**" Wavewing snarled. "**Give it up.**"

"**_Let go_****,**" Ivor taunted from the bay. "**_How was she ever going to help you?_**_" _Hiccup remembered Odin's words â€" Kyra had been the only one he could turn to before and the reason Odin had given him was that it was because she was technically not a mortal like the others. But he had a feeling that there was another reason for it. He'd been the only one Kyra could turn to when she was stuck in the other world, even if it wasn't in person. He and his world, were the only comforts she had in a place where she could never hope to be accepted.

He knew the answer to Ivor's question â€" Kyra was going to help him by simply being there for him, just as he'd always been there for her once his story became known to her old world. Hiccup had made his decision and closed his other hand around the hilt of the dagger.

"**There we go,**" Wavewing hissed. "**You see? There was never any point fighting. After all, isn't the human heart too weak to stand up against the power you could have?*" Hiccup forced his forest green gaze to meet the amber one that he had once trusted. No words passed between the pair but Hiccup's hateful glare spoke louder than any shout. He tore his face away from Wavewing's and looked at his sister with her eyes screwed shut in fear â€" she knew her fate. Hiccup could no longer fight the urge to strike â€" the Darkwing's control over the cursed instincts within him was far too strong. He brought the knife down.

Kyra's screams could be heard from the other side of Berk.

* * *

><p>AN: I'm going to try to do updates three chapters at a

time from now so that I can get this finished before school starts. Hopefully that will be possible. Once again, hope you guys have enjoyed *_How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse_**** so far - please review and I'm open to constructive criticism but no flames.**

15. 15: A Heart that was too Strong

Chapter Fifteen: A Heart that was too Strong

Astrid and the other members of the team halted in their fight as they heard Kyra's scream rip through the battle. Two other cries accompanied it â€" that of the Weedsnake elder, Wavewing, and one from the Darkwing which roared in anger before vanishing beneath the waves, causing a torrent of water to flood the village. The water also washed the Weedsnakes back into the bay â€" for some reason, the battle had halted. Astrid led Stormfly straight to the chief's house where Kyra's scream had come from. Racing round to the back of the house, Astrid also let out a muffled scream at what she saw.

Hiccup had collapsed to the ground, blood flowing freely onto the grass. Kyra had already scurried over to help and Astrid could see the cause of the wound â€" Kyra's silver dagger lay embedded in Hiccup's chest all the way to the hilt.

"Oh, my gods...!" she stammered. "Hiccup! What have you done?!" she cried, running over and cradling Hiccup in her arms. She didn't remove the dagger â€" to do so would hurt Hiccup even further and cause so much blood loss that he could die.

"I...wasn't gonna...let them make me...hurt her..." Hiccup panted, his face contorted in pain. Kyra's face was stained with tears as she yelled at the other teens to get help. "I would...never hurt her...I couldn't..." There he went again with the 'wouldn't / couldn't' â€" Astrid could see how sincere he was and it dawned on her what he'd actually done. She lifted her face to Kyra with a questioning look in her eyes.

"He..." Kyra gulped. "Their control was too strong," she wept. "He couldn't stop himself from..."

"Bringing the knife down," Astrid realised. She snapped her gaze back to Hiccup. "You idiot! How could you?!" she cried, her hands covered in Hiccup's blood as she tried to staunch his wound and angry tears burning her face.

"I couldn't stop it...from coming down..." Hiccup groaned, wincing as he tried to remove the dagger (Kyra prevented him). "But...I _could_ stop it...from hitting Kyra." Astrid let the waterfall of tears cascade down her face. The control over Hiccup had been too powerful for him to not deliver the blow, but Hiccup's heart had been stronger than Wavewing or the Darkwing could have ever anticipated and he'd managed to gain enough control to bring the dagger into his own chest rather than his sister's. The Defenders of Berk finally arrived with Gothi in tow â€" Fishlegs barfed when he saw the amount of blood staining the ground, Snotlout could only stare in horror and the twins were clearly torn between amazement at the damage done and shock as their friend lay mortally wounded in Kyra and Astrid's arms.

Gothi gently knelt down by Kyra and mentioned for Astrid to put pressure of the wound to prevent anymore blood loss as she dressed it. Astrid was no healer, but she could tell that Hiccup was fading fast. He'd already lost so much blood, he was paler than ever and the knife had struck in such a place that it would be a miracle if no vital organ had been punctured " Kyra was praying against hope that Hiccup's dragon healing, if it remained, would heal any internal injuries before it was too late. His breathing was slowing down but it was still heavy as Gothi tried her best to dress his stab wound.

"Hiccup...stay with me," Astrid begged as she kept as much pressure on the gaping hole in Hiccup's chest as possible whilst Gothi tied off the first bandage and started the next one. Kyra offered to swap places " Astrid agreed as her best friend placed both hands above the wound and she cradled Hiccup gently in her arms. "Don't leave me again..." she wept. Hiccup was having trouble keeping his eyes open.

"I'm sorry...Astrid," he murmured, his voice getting quieter with every word that left his lips. "For...everything."

"Just shut up, will you?" Astrid muttered angrily. "You're gonna be okay..." She was cut off when Hiccup weakly raised a hand to her face. Like hers it was covered in his blood but she really couldn't care. She just wanted him to pull through. She clasped onto the hand and a fresh tear escaped her eye when she felt the gold band around his finger. "You're gonna make it...you _have _to..." she gulped.

"It's nice to see..." Hiccup started, his face slowly becoming less contorted. "...that some things never change," he smiled, almost repeating what Astrid had said before. Hiccup remained silent for a few moments, as did Astrid as Gothi tied off the second bandage. Red blood was still soaking through the fabric " it wasn't enough to save the boy. "Just promise me...one thing..." Hiccup whispered.

"What?" Astrid whimpered back. The Defenders of Berk fell silent, as had Gobber and Stoick who'd arrived merely moments ago. Everyone removed their helmets and held it to their hearts in respect. There was an unspoken truth that no one wanted to believe.

"Take care...of Toothless for me..." Hiccup whispered in his old dry-humoured tone. Astrid knew the meaning behind his words " 'don't forget me'. She shook her head desperately as Hiccup's emerald irises vanished beneath his eyelids and his hand dropped from her cheek.

"No...no, gods, please, no!" Astrid wept, shaking the boy in her arms frantically. "Hiccup, stop this, please! Wake up!" she cried.

But she knew there was nothing to be done. Hiccup lay unresponsive in her arms, either dead or too weak to move. She quickly checked if he was breathing " there was something there but it was so faint that there was barely any faith in the boy making it, even if he had any healing abilities left from his dragon side. Astrid didn't want to lose hope " Hiccup had come back from severe wounds before but even she had to doubt her belief in him. Kyra burst into fresh floods of tears and cried into her father's shoulder as Stoick placed a

comforting arm around his daughter. Fishlegs walked over and helped Astrid to her feet as Gobber picked up the lifeless body of Hiccup, still with his dragon wings and tail, and carried him through the village to the Infirmary where he could hopefully receive better treatment, although given how weak he was there was still the realisation that he might not last until the end of the fight.

The entire village fell silent as the doors were closed.

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><p>AN: I know this is a short chapter - it was originally part of Chapter 14 but I decided to split it.

16. 16: Coming Back Around

Chapter Sixteen: Coming Back Around

Kyra sat alone on Raven's Point that evening as the sun set. She'd managed to persuade the Weedsnakes to call off any further attacks for the night, although they were also recovering and fuming at the loss of their one chance to reignite the Gods' War. Kyra knew that she could be happy in the knowledge that the cycle was now broken â€" how could Hiccup kill her at all if he was the one lying on a hard wooden bed in the Infirmary? But at the same time she knew she could never feel happy about it. It would be ridiculous for anyone for rejoice at something like that. It was Astrid whom her heart reached out for â€" the poor girl had waited three long years for Hiccup to get back and now she'd just lost him all over again.

Kyra stared out at the sun falling below the horizon, glittering on the unusually calm sea and turning the sky into a vivid pink. Despite everything that had happened, she still couldn't stop thinking of what Ivor had said to her. She couldn't get rid of that feeling that maybe there was more to the Darkwing than people...and dragons...thought. It was a long shot, but it was worth a try â€" she closed her eyes and began searching for the Darkwing on her telepathic communication mindset. Miraculously, she found it.

"**_What do you want?_**" a scornful voice sounded.

"**_I just want to talk,_**" Kyra replied carefully. "**_Surely you can give me that after today._**" Moments later the giant dragon rose from the sea and rested on the cliff facing Kyra. The conversation switched to Dragonese.

"**You'd better have a better reason for this than a mere death wish**_**_,_**" Ivor snarled, his eye hit by Kyra earlier not as badly damaged as the other, still allowing him to see the eighteen year old.

"**Why did you save me?**" Kyra asked simply. "**Back then â€" when I was a baby**."

"**I thought I said it was because I wouldn't allow you to fall into the hands of lesser beings,**" Ivor hissed. Kyra noted the absence of any word that would suggest the Outcasts were even worse than the Hooligans in Ivor's eyes. Maybe her hunch was correct.

"**You mean it was because you cared for me?**" she quizzed. Ivor recoiled in surprise. "**That's what it was, right?**" Kyra pressed. "**You didn't save me because you thought the Outcasts were worse than the Hooligan tribe. You did it because you cared.**"

"**Nonsense!**" Ivor snapped, turning his large head away. "**You are a human...a contaminant in the dragons' world...you have always been weaklings...**"

"**You never used to think like that, though, did you?**" Kyra pointed out. "**You were the link between our worlds, a bit like I am now. You used to watch over both humans and dragons. If you always thought we were weak you would have wiped us out millennia ago, even before the Gods' War.**" Ivor cringed away at the mention of the event. "**Ivor â€" I want to help.**"

"**How can you expect to help me?**" Ivor scoffed. Kyra could hear the softened tone of his voice â€" he sounded almost sad. "**I...I cursed you. You are powerless. Even if you weren't, how can you help me?**" There was a silence before Kyra answered.

"**By being there for you,**" she replied gently. Ivor turned his majestic head to face her again. "**In effect I'm still your sister, Ivor,**" she continued.

"**NO!**" Ivor snapped. "**You're anything but her! Now thanks to your pathetic younger brother she can never return!**"

"**But you made sure her spirit lived on!**" Kyra protested. "**It might not have been what you wanted, but isn't honouring LohikÃrme's memory more important than starting a war to bring her back without knowing whether the humans or dragons will come out surviving?**" she added desperately. "**You may have destroyed her in a blind rage but you made sure her legacy lived on! It might have been your grief that broke the link between the dragons' world and ours but in saving LohikÃrme's spirit you made a way to fix that link!**"

Kyra was using all of her powers of persuasion to get Ivor to see reason. Hopefully she could succeed where LohikÃrme had failed all those centuries ago.

"**I destroyed her...**" Ivor murmured. "**It's my fault it happened.**" Kyra walked to the edge of the cliff and gently placed a hand on Ivor's scaled neck. He shuddered at her touch but he made no move to attack or retreat.

"**She would be proud,**" Kyra assured. "**You might not want to admit it, but...you've watched over all of us. Every single Dragon Shifter there has ever been â€" you kept an eye on us, didn't you?**"

"**I let their brothers murder them...just as I murdered my sister...How can you say that I watched over them?**"

"**They were cursed to share her fate,**" Kyra remembered sadly. Another memory rang through her mind. "**But not me â€" you knew from the start that Hiccup could never bring himself to kill me. That's

why you cursed him to not be able to return to his human self until I was dead,**" she realised.

"**And cursed you to not regain your powers until he had returned to that form,**" Ivor added sorrowfully. Kyra asked him why. "**By removing your powers I would have removed any way for Lohikäärme to return. By having the spirit of the Dragon Shifter return upon your death...**" he paused, unable to talk about Kyra with the same hate he'd had before. "**...it would have allowed her to come back at her full strength.**" He remained silent. "**There is little I've done for the dragons except cause them misery,**" he grumbled sadly. "**My curses have ruined lives, I know that. And I know there is nought I can do now to change things.**" Kyra noticed how remorseful Ivor seemed â€" it was as if the monster he'd been before no longer existed. She suddenly realised something as she gently patted Ivor's neck. A scale came loose in her hand and disappeared into a sand-like substance, drifting away on the wind, and she remembered the last belief written by Brynja the Wise in Myths of the Unknown.

"**But your curse is now lifted,**" she smiled. Ivor's one good eye locked with hers. "**I will not die by my brother's hand...**" she paused to gulp back her tears. "**The fate of the gods is not ours to live.**" He smiled widened as another scale fell apart in her hand. "**You're free.**"

Ivor growled slightly in amazement as the dark green scales fell away, swirling around him as sand. Kyra covered her eyes to protect them as the High Diving Darkwing began to shrink and fade away. When Kyra looked again, the sea dragon was gone. In its place was a young man in his late twenties, early thirties. He looked a lot like Hiccup â€" the hair was the same shade of dark auburn brown and his eyes were the same green but there were numerous differences. For a start, the man had a fine beard adorning his face which held wisdom beyond its apparent years; his build was that of a warrior â€" whereas Hiccup's skinny frame had developed slightly, it was still skinny compared to this man's. He wore robes of green, black and silver with the finest fur lining his cloak. At his side he carried a sword which looked like a larger version of Kyra's dagger â€" it had a silver blade and golden hilt with dragon carvings decorating it. They looked so real they appeared to be alive.

Kyra smiled â€" Ivor, the Dragon God of Spirit was released at last from his monstrous form.

"There is little I can do to atone for what I've done to your brother, Valkyra," Ivor noted sadly. "Yet my faith in your kind has been renewed. I only wish I could have realised it..."

"What do you mean?" Kyra frowned. Ivor glanced in the direction of the Infirmary where Hiccup's body lay as still as stone.

"In my fury, I used to think human hearts were weak â€" too weak to consider keeping alive," he explained. "Hiccup's actions earlier proved otherwise...at a high cost." Kyra didn't bother stopping the tears. "In doing so he prevented a war which could have ended either world...it was wrong of me to consider that gamble." He looked back at Kyra. "You are right â€" your brother's deeds have broken the blood stained cycle of the Dragon Shifter and freed me...I only regret that it came about like this." Kyra cast her line of sight to the bay.

"Will the Weedsnakes still fight?" she asked. "Now that you're...you." She couldn't help it. To her disappointment, Ivor's expression turned solemn.

"I fear so," he replied. "The Weedsnakes have been my allies for centuries but they are a species of dragon that is bred on a hunger for power. They defied me and my sister more times than I dare to remember in the days of old."

"If that was the case then why did you side with them?"

"I knew they would do anything for power...just as I did," Ivor explained. "At any rate, I have promised them the victory of the dragons in the new Gods' War for so long I doubt they'll give up so quickly."

"You had to make it difficult for us, didn't you?" Kyra muttered. Ivor chuckled in bemusement.

"Just like Lohikäärme..." he smiled despite himself. Kyra turned to face him.

"Ivor...what will you do now?" she asked. Ivor hesitated before answering.

"There are things I must do," he replied. Kyra winced â€" she'd been hoping for an offer to help. Having a god on their side would have been great for the village right now. "But rest assured that I will return. I won't let them harm you." His shape shifted into that of a Night Fury with emerald-green eyes before he took off into the night. Kyra couldn't help but smile sadly at his last sentence.

"Just like Hiccup..." she muttered. She headed back down to the village where Stoick came over with a look of worry on his face.

"Kyra â€" where have you been?" he scolded. "I heard you went up to Raven's Point and when I saw that dragon I..."

"Dad, it's okay," Kyra calmed him down, glancing into the skies where Ivor had flown off. Against the blackness of the night even her dragon eye couldn't pick up anything. She could just pray and hope that Ivor kept to his word. "The Darkwing isn't going to bother anyone anymore."

"What happened?" Stoick asked in amazement. Kyra quickly explained who the Darkwing was and what had happened up at Raven's Point. "So that dragon â€" it was really another one of their gods?"

"Yes," Kyra nodded. "But...he's fine, now. He's come to," she finished a hint of a smile showing on her face. Her attention was caught by a young man walking through the village â€" she could just about recognise him as Artair. She still felt horrible about the way she'd spoken to him before...even earlier that day they'd avoided making contact with each other.

"Are you still worried about it?" Stoick questioned calmly. Kyra sighed.

"I'm not entirely sure if it's what I want," she huffed, knowing that it sounded selfish. "I treated Artair horribly the other day! What if I'm terrible at being a wife?" she added, spitting on the last word. Stoick placed a hand on his daughter's shoulder.

"Sometimes we have to face things that we don't want in life," he explained. "But very often it is taking on the responsibilities we are given that help us make up for our past mistakes," he added gently. "I know you've never liked the idea of being married, Kyra. I respect that â€" that's why I had to hammer it into Mugdug's head earlier that I wanted your choice to be considered."

"You did?" Kyra blinked.

"I did say I didn't want my daughter to live the rest of her life feeling miserable," Stoick reminded her, his eyes twinkling underneath his absurdly large eyebrows. "Needless to say, Mugdug wasn't all pleased with the idea but I think it got through."

"What happens now about it?" Kyra asked, her eyes drifting towards the Infirmary. "Now that..." she couldn't bring herself to say it. "Now that he's hurt...Because I don't feel comfortable leaving this place in Snotlout's hands, even if I hate chief-ing," she grimaced. Stoick nodded in understanding.

"I'll need to see to that," he noted. He began leading Kyra back towards their house â€" the moon was now high in the sky and everyone who could still fight needed their rest for tomorrow.

All fell quiet in Berk as torches were extinguished for the night. The only light that still shone from the island was coming from the Infirmary where a seventeen year old Nordic Blonde sat beside the still body of her fianc . Astrid hadn't left Hiccup since he'd been placed on the bed in the back of the hut. She'd refused to leave even when everyone else had finished saying their goodbyes. Once this was over...if there he couldn't hold on until the end...there would be a Hero's Funeral held for him â€" a burning ship as his final send-off. Astrid simply couldn't find herself willing to say goodbye â€" she'd waited for and loved Hiccup for too long to do that.

"Come back...please..." she whispered as she held the now cleaned hand of her fianc , the gold band still resting on his finger. Hiccup looked so peaceful, as if finally free from all the trials he'd faced during his life â€" his struggle to be accepted by his own family, his fight to win the approval of the village, his quest to prove himself as a Viking...everything he'd accomplished, yet it had never seemed enough for Hiccup. For him, his fight was continuous. Now, at last, he was at rest. He no longer had to fight â€" for that, Astrid was mentally kicking herself. She knew she was partially responsible for why Hiccup had had such a hard time fitting in...she would never forgive herself for it.

Astrid looked up when she felt something nudge her other hand. Blinking the tears out of her eyes, she recognised the muzzle of a Night Fury at her side.

"You came to be with him too, huh?" she asked, gently scratching the dragon's nose. The Night Fury rested his front paws on the slab and began licking Hiccup all over. He paid particular attention to Hiccup's chest, where the blood had finally ceased flowing. Kyra had

checked him earlier and apparently most of the internal damage had closed thanks to Hiccup's remaining dragon abilities and the wound itself had closed the wound after a while but it had been too little too late. Hiccup had lost so much blood there was little faith in him making it out of this one. Astrid had been watching him but Hiccup's pulse was so faint she could hardly tell it was there any more and his breathing had gotten to a point where it came in soft irregular bursts " he was so weak that he could hardly be clinging to life anymore. Astrid was perhaps the only one who still hoped Hiccup would make it. She patted the Night Fury's flank sadly.

"I don't think any amount of Night Fury saliva's gonna help him now, Toothless. We just have to...to wait," she murmured, sniffing and gulping back tears. The Night Fury looked at her with a look of sympathy filling its green eyes " Astrid had to look away. Those eyes reminded her too much of Hiccup, whose eyes might never open again. "But it's something you've always done, right?" she asked. The Night Fury nodded. Astrid accepted it " besides, Hiccup may have even appreciated a parting gift from his friend, even if it was a load of saliva...well, their friendship had pretty much started over a regurgitated fish.

The night drew on and eventually Astrid fell asleep, her fingers entwined with those of Hiccup's. As she wasn't looking, the Night Fury breathed a small shot of blue fire onto the wound still present on Hiccup's chest before it slunk out of the Infirmary and vanished into the night as Hiccup's chest began to rise and fall steadily.

17. 17: The Final Battle starts Now

Chapter Seventeen: The Final Battle Starts Now

Astrid woke up to the sounds of orders being barked outside. Sunlight streamed through the ajar doors so she reluctantly left Hiccup's side ("Hang in there and don't stop breathing!") to head out where she immediately bumped into the Defenders of Berk.

"So early?" she asked.

"Not taking any chances," Snotlout replied. "If you're tired you can always ride with me, you know," he added but Astrid replied to his offer by stamping on his foot and punching his face.

"Weedsnakes have been spotted all around the island " we're surrounded on all sides," Fishlegs cut in worriedly. "No sign of the Darkwing."

"Wonder what happened to it," Astrid muttered. The twins were already mounted on Barf-Belch with fully loaded crossbows.

"Who cares? This is still gonna be awesome," Tuffnut snickered.

"I agree with Tuffnut," Ruffnut added.

"That's a first," Astrid noted sarcastically. She called Stormfly and spotted Kyra doing an aerial check with Windwalker so she flew up to join her. "What have we got today?"

"Fishlegs isn't wrong," Kyra replied. "We're not going to be able to get out onto the water with the ships."

"And that means we can't get back-up," Astrid grumbled. Kyra smirked knowingly.

"Not from ships," she winked. "I've got something that might just work."

"You remember you're still without magic, right?" Astrid pointed out. Kyra glanced at her right hand â€" it was true, the mark was still there and she still couldn't use any Shifter Magic.

"True, but there's still one dragon I know I can get to," she reminded Astrid whose eyes lit up.

"Newtsbreath!" she realised. "Is it gonna be enough?"

"If I can get her to bring reinforcements, we stand a better chance," Kyra confirmed. "Besides, I can hardly leave the Meatheads without dragons when that's what we need most."

"I thought Artair was the only one who knows how to fly," Astrid frowned.

"They can learn on the job," Kyra huffed. "We need more flyers." Astrid couldn't see any point in arguing â€" if Kyra was slipping into Gobber's teaching methods it was more than an indication that she wasn't backing down.

"What happened with the Darkwing, by the way?" she asked instead. "Fishlegs said there's no sign of it."

"Probably because it's not fighting anymore," Kyra explained. She quickly told Astrid about what had happened the previous night. "He said he'd come back but I haven't seen him."

"So the Darkwing was really Ivor who is kinda like an older brother to you now?" Astrid confirmed. Kyra nodded. "Right," Astrid frowned. That...made little to no sense.

"We'll talk about it later â€" right now we need to move," Kyra noted, glancing down at the village â€" the Weedsnakes had just launched their attack. The time for talks was over. Astrid took over as head of the Dragon Team, that included the juniors.

"Nadders, move in from the East!" she bellowed, taking a shot at the nearest Weedsnake and turning away before she could see what happened. She wasn't even sure if she'd gotten the bolt into the mouth but even so she had to do what she could. "Gronkles â€" take aim...FIRE!"

A barrage of molten rock hit plenty of Weedsnakes head on â€" quite literally. The Deadly Nadder squad had unleashed a torrent of spikes into the Weedsnakes who had been unfortunate enough to be within the firing range. Astrid scanned the battle field for Wavewing â€" the largest Weedsnake â€" but she could see no sign of him. She did, however, see Toothless fighting it out with one on the ground â€" knowing how dragons preferred to be left to their own fights, she left him to it.

"Kyra!" she called. "How much longer until they get here?"

"Soon, with any luck," Kyra replied, barrel-rolling to avoid an oncoming stream of violet fire from a Weedsnake. She retaliated by getting Windwalker to send a fireball into its face. "Keep an eye on Toothless, will you?" she asked. "I'm not having Hiccup's best friend go down today."

"Or Windwalker's mate, more like," Astrid replied teasingly despite herself, getting Stormfly to send a wave of spikes into a Weedsnake threatening Fishlegs. It gave the boy enough time to fire an oak crossbow bolt into the thing's mouth as it shrieked in pain. "You can't blame him for fighting so hard â€" you should've seen him with Hiccup last night." Kyra frowned.

"Last night?" she repeated. "Astrid, Toothless was with me and Windwalker at home last night." Astrid's brow furrowed.

"No, I saw a Night Fury yesterday when I was with him," she protested. "He came over and..." Kyra's eyes had widened. "Kyra, what is it?"

"What colour were its eyes?" Kyra asked quickly. Astrid frowned.

"Green, why?" she replied.

"What type of green?" Kyra pressed. Astrid scrunched her face up in an attempt to remember.

"They were..." she froze. The Night Fury's eyes from the night before hadn't been the same bright green as Toothless' or Windwalker's. They'd been emerald-green. "You mean to say that Night Fury wasn't Toothless...LOOK OUT!" she yelled, charging Stormfly into Windwalker as a Weedsnake threatened to lash out at Kyra. Kyra spun Windwalker back under control but Astrid wasn't so lucky as she tumbled off her dragon. She grabbed the nearest weapon and held her crossbow in front of her, waiting for her chance...

Too bad that someone else took it.

"Hey, Heather!" Astrid grinned as a pink and yellow Monstrous Nightmare tackled the Weedsnake in front of her. Heather leapt onto the sea dragon's head and fired a bolt straight into its throat. The results weren't pretty.

"What? You're not the only one with a crossbow," the raven-haired girl winked. "Oh, and I brought the back-up," she added, indicating the skies. Astrid's grin widened â€" she could see multiple Meatheads riding dragons â€" some leaping off to join the battle on the ground â€" but they were there nonetheless. Coupled with the Meatheads that were already there, this brought the Vikings numbers up to match the Weedsnakes, although the sea dragons themselves were slowly cutting the amount of Vikings down as many were injured or even killed.

"KYRA!" a shout sounded as a Weedsnake made a beeline for Kyra, knocking her off Windwalker. Astrid recognised the shout as male â€" the next thing she knew the Weedsnake that had tackled Kyra got

blasted by a shot of magnesium based fire " Artair was flying a green and gold Deadly Nadder.

"Artair!" Kyra greeted, unable to stop the smile spreading onto her face. Artair dismounted and helped the girl to her feet.

"You're right " it is harder than it looks," he panted. He turned to face Heather. "How'd you manage to teach those guys so quickly?"

"I didn't," Heather grimaced. "I think it was more Newtsbreath getting the dragons to comply " if you look closely you'll see that most of the Meatheads are missing a few things." A Meathead battling a Weedsnake nearby informed Astrid that at least one of those 'few things' was their pants.

"Charming," she noted sarcastically. A roar suddenly sounded " Wavewing had finally decided to show himself. "Okay " time to cut that oversized eel down to size!" she shouted, leaping back onto Stormfly. Kyra quickly mounted Windwalker, Heather grabbed hold of Newtsbreath and swung herself up and Artair practically jumped onto his Nadder. Astrid led the attack on the Weedsnake elder, followed by the rest of the team although Kyra was the one to catch his attention.

"Hey! Seaweed-breath!" she bellowed. Wavewing turned his head in their direction only to be met with a fireball to the face. "That's for Hiccup!" Kyra snapped. Wavewing launched himself from the water, taking a snap at the girl but was greeted by two shots of sticky flame to his long neck from Snotlout and Heather, closely followed by a molten rock to the back from Fishlegs and an explosion in his face courtesy of the Thorston Twins.

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Wavewing roared in anger, focusing his attention on Kyra.

"**You foolish brat!**" he howled. "**You robbed us of our last chance of bringing her ba...!**" Kyra didn't let him finish as she led Windwalker to take a shot at his unprotected mouth.

"You're the one who led him to stab himself!" she retaliated. "If it weren't for you he'd still be here fighting with the rest of us!" Wavewing sent a flame of violet-coloured flame in Kyra's direction.

"**You humans and your excuses,**" he hissed. "**If it weren't for you our god would never have abandoned us!**"

"Shut up and die already!" Kyra cried. She had a point " no matter what the Defenders of Berk threw at Wavewing, he came back as strong as ever. The fireball to the mouth had caused some serious damage but not enough to slow him down. She suddenly glanced towards the land where a Weedsnake was creeping unnoticed towards the Infirmary...to Hiccup. "YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE!" she shrieked. Hiccup was still breathing according to Gothi's report " there was still a chance, albeit a very slim one, of him making it.

"**If he's nearly gone, surely it's of no matter to you if we save you the trouble of giving him a funeral,**" Wavewing taunted. Kyra

rammed Windwalker into his side, injecting as many oak bolts as she could into the sea dragon. If there was any effect, it wasn't noticeable.

"Astrid! The Infirmary!" she yelled instead. Astrid spotted the Weedsnake and shot towards the Infirmary, distracting it with a blast of fire. She somersaulted off Stormfly and began the fight on the ground, desperately trying to keep the sea dragon away from the Infirmary " she still clung to the narrow hope that Hiccup would somehow pull through, aided slightly by the dragon in him that had closed his wound, so she wasn't going to let that Weedsnake anywhere near him.

"What more do you want with him?" she screeched, firing shot after shot at the Weedsnake but too enraged and high on adrenaline rushing through her blood to take proper aim and the bolts merely pinpricked the Weedsnake's indigo hide. As she was fighting, she failed to notice Toothless race past her and through the slightly open doors of the Infirmary " still distracted, the Weedsnake didn't see him either and continued to try getting Astrid out of his way. An unexpected tail lash sent Astrid flying, not giving her enough time to chase the Weedsnake as she lost ground and the indigo dragon reared up like a snake ready to strike, turning its focus on the Infirmary. Astrid was too busy trying to get it away that she didn't see Toothless fly out of a hole in the roof " if she had, maybe she might have stopped.

Yet she didn't. Instead, she panted back towards the wooden hut just as the Weedsnake let loose a stream of bright purple flames, engulfing the Infirmary and destroying everything inside.

"No..." Astrid stammered, stumbling to a halt. Those monsters had completely taken Hiccup away from her " why did they have to add to her pain taking away the only chance he had of recovering? She collapsed on the ground, her strength vanishing as she fell to her knees and dropped her weapons in despair. The Weedsnake turned its attention back to her, opening its mouth so that Astrid could see the build-up of flammable gas in the back of its throat. She closed her eyes and covered her head, waiting for the inevitable...

BANG!

Astrid flinched as something exploded above her head but the small amount of light that made it through her eyelids hadn't been violet " it had been bright blue. Uncovering her head and opening her eyes, she gasped when she saw who her saviour had been.

A young man no older than seventeen sat astride a Night Fury with a red prosthetic tail fin. He was about the same height as Astrid, maybe half an inch taller; he had a build that wasn't overly muscular but at the same time wasn't scrawny; his face had a slight hint of a stubble and covered with freckles; his eyes were circles of forest green that shouted courage to anyone who saw them; and his messy dark auburn-brown hair framed his oval face with a single bang tied into a small braid to keep it out of his face. When he dismounted the Night Fury, it was revealed that he sported a spring-loaded prosthetic left leg, mirroring the injury of his dragon. He was wearing what appeared to be simple leather armour and in addition to this, around his midriff was a mass of bandages with a large patch of red-brown

staining the chest area.

It was Hiccup.

"Hiccup!" Astrid squealed as she scrambled to her feet and towards the young man. Hiccup jogged down towards her and the pair embraced as if the world would end.

"Astrid!" he cried, wincing slightly as Astrid collided with his chest wound. "Are you okay?" Astrid broke the hug and could only stare at the young man in amazement.

"Yeah..." she panted, more out of astonishment than anything else. She struggled to find any words. "You're alive!" she settled with.

"I know!" Hiccup grinned back, his voice raising in pitch out of equal surprise.

"And you're..." Astrid added, still taking in the sight of her fiancé whom she'd thought had gone in the fire.

"Me!" Hiccup finished, his voice still slightly higher than normal.

"Yeah!" Astrid nodded. "But...how? On both accounts?"

"I dunno," Hiccup admitted, glancing at himself. There was now nothing left to suggest he'd ever been part dragon — ever scale had vanished and he was now wings-and-tail free. The curse had finally been cheated and the wretched mark that had been burned onto his left hand for three years had finally gone. Astrid figured out one of her questions of how.

"Your actions..." she realised. "When you brought the knife down but not on Kyra...what was the third test thingy you were supposed to do again?"

"The Test of Heart," Hiccup remembered, reciting Odin's words. "A strong decision made by heart alone..."

"Well, I hate to admit it but that was one heck of a decision if any — if that hadn't done the trick I don't know what would've done," Astrid couldn't help but smile. Hiccup was finally home — properly.

"DUCK!" he yelped suddenly as a river of violet flame spiralled over their heads. Astrid covered her head to shield herself and a cry of agony coming from the village ruined the moment but it was far from human. Hiccup and Astrid both looked up and noticed that they weren't even hurt — there were no burns from the flames even though they'd felt the searing heat. Glancing towards the village, they saw Bucket standing next a Weedsnake that was dotted with purple flames and lying motionless on the floor. Its face was not one that Hiccup wasn't to remember.

"Bucket!" Astrid called. "What just happened there?"

"I don't know," Bucket replied bewildered. "The fire just came out of nowhere — maybe a misfire." Hiccup glanced around the near

vicinity. There were plenty of Weedsnakes in the near vicinity â€" Bucket may have had a point. However, the fire flowed through the houses once more but seemed to completely ignore the Vikings. Instead, the Weedsnakes began shrieking and contorting in ways Astrid and Hiccup thought impossible before lying still as rock on the floor with fear and pain plastered onto their faces.

"Why are they dropping dead but not us?" he muttered. Nearby, the flames seemed to strike the last remaining Weedsnake in the area and as it screeched in a noise that would rival a banshee, Hiccup was able to catch its last words:

"**What are you doing?! Your own kind...TRAIT...!**"

Hiccup's forest green eyes widened in terror â€" so another Weedsnake was doing this? The violet fire was clearly cursed â€" it was leaving a mark (a more jagged one than the Mark of the Darkwing) on the nose of every Weedsnake it touched â€" yet it was only affecting them and not the Vikings, seemingly removing the very life energy from them. What was going on?

Bucket hadn't seemed to notice Hiccup â€" the poor guy wasn't the most observant of people even by Viking standards so it wasn't that surprising. Mulch, however, ran over and instantly noticed.

"Hiccup?" he spluttered. "How are you...you're alive?"

"Before you ask, no, I don't know how," Hiccup interrupted, whistling for Toothless. "I'm going up," he noted. "Something's not right and I've got a score to settle with Wavewing anyway."

"Hey!" Astrid snapped, grabbing his arm. "Don't think I'm going to let you throw yourself headfirst into something like this."

"Astrid, I have to do this!" Hiccup retorted. "The Weedsnakes aren't something to simply drop dead in a fire like this, especially when Vikings aren't even singed â€" I need to see what's going on. Besides, the others are still up there â€" they need help."

"And so do you â€" which is why I'm sticking with you," Astrid insisted. "That means I'm riding Toothless with you."

"What about Stormfly?"

"You forget that she can actually fly and fight by herself."

"Meh...TouchÃ©," Hiccup grumbled. There was no stopping Astrid when she'd decided what she wanted to do.

"In any case, your near-death-rate has reached fifteen already," Astrid pointed out, placing her hands on her hips. "Do you really think I'm gonna let you get yourself into another so quickly?"

"Well, you know me," Hiccup shrugged as he mounted Toothless, grinning his trademark crooked smile as he did so. "The guy who almost dies at least once per adventure," he added, almost quoting his sister. Astrid walked over and smiled back.

"I know," she nodded warmly. "And that's the Hiccup I fell in love with." Hiccup froze for a moment â€" Astrid had said it before but it still had the same effect on him.

"Thanks, Astrid," he smiled, offering her his hand and helping her up onto Toothless' back. Toothless cooed slightly before they took off and Hiccup was happier than before to see he could still understand Dragonese.

"**You'd better make sure we get through this â€" she's gonna make sure you can't sit down for a month if you don't,**" he teased. Hiccup smirked and led Toothless into the skies.

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Kyra was noticing Wavewing's gradually increasing strength â€" every minute or so he set off a stream of bright purple fire into the village before it returned straight back to him. As it did, he grew in size and his attacks became stronger and stronger. She, Heather, the twins and Snotlout had been doing the main attack whilst Fishlegs had been scouting the battlefield and had literally just gotten back with a report.

"They're just collapsing everywhere when the fire hits them!" he called, hovering over on Meatlug. "No oak bolts or anything and none of us have been affected â€" they're just dropping like flies! It's not pretty down there."

"Well, this guy's been getting bigger!" Kyra yelled, somersaulting with Windwalker over a shot of violet flame. Wavewing let out a loud hiss and his amber eyes flashed blood-red as he sent another stream of fire towards the village â€" a Weedsnake on land (battling Stoick and Thornado) was caught in the flames and shrieked with a sound that had the potential to burst an eardrum and twisted itself in ways thought impossible. Kyra hadn't noticed it before â€" she'd assumed that the cries she'd been hearing had been because people had been getting a bunch of pot-shots with the oak bolts.

Now she was seeing something a lot worse.

"Oh, gods..." she muttered, her eyes widening to the size of saucers and the pupil in her dragon eye narrowing to the width of a needle. "That's not possible..."

"**Is it?*" Wavewing jeered. "**You're the so-called Goddess herself in human form â€" you're the one who should know what we're capable of.**" He made a bite for the girl on the Star Backed Night Fury but Kyra just about got out of the way in time. She flew up to a higher altitude to prepare a kamikaze attack when Heather called for her attention.

"Kyra! The Infirmary!" the young woman shouted, indicating the Infirmary which was now smothered in a violet blaze that the Fire Squad were struggling to douse. Kyra's anger levels rocketed and, screaming like a banshee, she led Windwalker into a dive-bomb attack, smacking Wavewing directly into the temple but something else â€" another bright blue fireball â€" hit the Weedsnake Elder in the neck. For a moment Kyra and the others were disorientated and darted their eyes around the skies when Kyra saw him.

Toothless was flying with two Viking teens on his back. Astrid was the passenger, holding a fully loaded crossbow, and the driver was someone she wasn't expecting to see flying ever again.

"Hiccup?" she breathed, a smile like none other lighting her face up. She turned to face the others. "Hiccup's alive!" she crowed.

"How did he survive that?" Ruffnut spluttered, knowing that everyone knew what she was referring to this time.

"Who cares?" Heather cried gleefully. "We got our captain back!"

"Since when was Haddock captain of the squad?" Snotlout frowned.

"Since forever!" Heather argued. "Now shut up â€" you're not the only one with a Nightmare!"

"Now the Defenders of Berk are back in business!" Tuffnut snickered slyly as he and his sister raced to join Hiccup, Astrid and Toothless closely followed by the others. Artair also flew alongside Kyra as they went to greet Hiccup when he spotted something.

"Kyra â€" watch out!" he yelled, swerving out of the way. Kyra wasn't able to react in time as Wavewing's paw batted her and Windwalker out of the sky, causing Kyra to lose her grip and start falling towards the waves. Windwalker soon corrected herself and began diving after her rider but something stopped her and she froze mid-flight after casting a brief glance at Toothless. Artair was still diving after her and Hiccup had also made a beeline to catch his sister.

Now that he was closer, Kyra could see her brother more clearly â€" he was no longer part dragon. There was no doubt about it â€" he was fully human. Which could only mean one thing â€" glancing at her right hand, her suspicions were confirmed.

"Guys! Get out of the way! I've got this!" she yelled against the wind. Hiccup knew what his older sister meant and nodded at Artair, saying they had to trust her. Both dragons halted in their dives as Kyra continued plummeting towards the sea. "Come on, come on," she muttered angrily.

"Hurry up," Hiccup mumbled, Astrid squeezing him so tightly in worry that he was scared she might suffocate him. "Fly..."

Kyra could see the water getting closer but still nothing was happening. She had one shot at this â€" it had to work.

"Come on...COME ON!" she shrieked, her marks suddenly glowing bright red as power shot through her body like a surge of lightning. Just as she was about to hit the waves, Kyra felt something burst from her between her shoulder blades and spread outwards, slowing her fall so suddenly that the downdraft caused the water beneath her to spray outwards as, finally, the Dragon Shifter flew by her own strength again.

"Yeah!" Astrid crowed.

"Alright!" the twins chorused as Kyra flew upwards to join them,

Night Fury wings extended to full length as she hovered on an updraft. Hiccup grinned " both curses had finally been lifted,

"Nice to see you back to your old self," he greeted. Kyra's smile widened.

"Same can be said for you," she replied. Hiccup glanced down at Wavewing who couldn't quite get the height required to get to the Defenders of Berk.

"What's happening?" he asked urgently. His question was answered almost instantly as Wavewing let out another hiss and his eyes flashed red and let out one last torrent of violet flame " it caught the last of the Weedsnakes on land and they let out a shriek of pain and contorted until they lay still on the ground. Hiccup finally understood " the cursed fire was drawing the life from the Weedsnakes it touched and transferred that energy " that power " to the origin of the fire: Wavewing, strengthening him beyond measure. "Gods...what is he doing?"

"That's...barbaric..." Kyra muttered. Fishlegs frowned in confusion.

"What is it?" he asked. Kyra knew there was no denying the sad truth of it now. Wavewing was more of a monster than she'd previously thought.

"Weedsnakes will do anything for power," she explained, a bitter tone ringing in her voice as she remembered Ivor's words. "I guess turning against their own kind and taking their life-forces from them to fuel their own is one such thing." Everyone's face lit up with horror.

"That's not right!" Artair protested.

"That's insane!" Heather added.

"That's awesome!" the twins snickered. Everyone else turned to look at them making faces which clearly said '_What the heck?_', "Well...not from their perspective," Tuffnut shrugged. Hiccup looked at the number of Weedsnakes lying on the ground, their lives stolen from one they'd all looked up to " hate stained his voice as he spoke.

"Looks like I wasn't the only one who thought I could trust him," he growled. He took a deep breath and turned to the others. "We've gotta get him away from Berk " he's too powerful to risk being here any longer."

"Can't we just annihilate him before he reaches max power?" Ruffnut pointed out before the entire team were forced to split as a column of violet flame rose between them.

"Something tells me no," Snotlout whimpered. Well, that was probably the smartest thing he'd said all day. Hiccup mentioned for Astrid to hold on as she called for Stormfly and Hiccup led the team into a synchronised kamikaze bomb attack. Wavewing was bombarded with fire from all angles but no damage seemed to be done.

It's going to take more than a few fireworks to have any effect,*_Little One_****,**" Wavewing hissed. At that, Stormfly arrived so Astrid leapt onto her dragon and tossed Hiccup the crossbow "grabbing it he took aim and fired an steel-tipped oak bolt straight into the back of Wavewing's throat. The Weedsnake writhed in agony but the single oak twig didn't seem to do much else " the sea dragon was still...standing, if you could call it that.

"Yeah, and it's gonna take more than your party tricks to stop me from protecting my home," Hiccup growled back. Wavewing looked at him directly in the eye " the dragon's now blood-red-amber eyes narrowed with hate, as did Hiccup's.

***You would have made such a good dragon,**" Wavewing repeated angrily.

"You would have made a good mentor if you'd actually kept people's trust," Hiccup retorted in equal anger. "It's not just a dragon whose trust you want to betray " it's a humans as well." Nearby, Artair's memory rang with the words Kyra had said to him when she'd taken him for a flight on Windwalker: _If a dragon gives you their trust, you can't betray it_. It was clear that it went both ways.

***I gave you my word that I would get you home,**" Wavewing snarled.

"I reckon I think most of that was me, not you," Hiccup retaliated blankly. The Weedsnake bristled.

***Fine. If you want to finish this, find me where I found you all those years ago,**" he ordered. ***No dragons or your sister " just one person for company. I doubt you'll want to meet your true end alone.**" Hiccup tensed visibly " his hate for this guy was growing every second. If he was the Dragon Shifter there would be no doubt that he would have entered or be on the verge of entering the Shifter State right now. In fact he was amazed Kyra was managing to keep her cool although both eyes had turned into their dragon appearances. ***I'll be waiting.**"

With that Wavewing vanished beneath the waves, leaving an entire school of Weedsnakes littered on land, lifeless and still as their power " life and otherwise " had been stripped from them to fuel their Elder's own selfish desires.

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><p>AN: So close to the end with this one! I'm amazed how this turned out - I never expected a re-write like this to turn out quite as well as it has done in comparison to the original.

Oh, the second set of designs for Kyra has been posted on deviantART - if the link below doesn't work for you send me a PM and I'll send you a new link.

** art/HTTYD-OC-character-designs-aged-18-390166199**

Once again, tell me what you think in the reviews or leave a comment on deviantART and if there are any other designs you want to see, send me a PM and I'll see what I can do

18. 18: How do you fight Underwater?

****Chapter Eighteen: How are we supposed to Fight Underwater?****

Kyra couldn't help but walk through Berk and feel sorry for the Weedsnakes that lay scattered on the ground, their faces scrunched in ways she thought impossible for a dragon and their bodies contorted in such a way it made her feel sick. At first she'd hated these creatures for what they'd done...what they'd tried to do...but now she couldn't help but feel sympathy towards the ones who'd placed their trust in their elder and had paid the cost of that trust with their lives.

"The monster..." she whispered hatefully, struggling to keep her emotions under control. The anger she felt right now towards Wavewing was so strong she was on the verge of entering her Shifter State for the first time in three years. In fact, she didn't just feel angry for that - she was starting to get angry at Ivor as well. He had yet to return like he said he would - he could have stopped Wavewing from carrying out such a horrific deed. Even the Weedsnakes didn't deserve a fate like this, despite their hunger for power. It just wasn't right.

Black Night Fury scales were already spreading along Kyra's skin, both of her eyes had turned dragon like and her marks were flickering red. She couldn't remember feeling this enraged before. Berk's resident dragons were taking the dead away - both Berk's own and the Weedsnakes, all equal in death. Kyra was only calmed down when she felt a hand on her shoulder - however, upon turning around, she noticed that it wasn't Hiccup.

"I'm sorry," Artair muttered. "This can't be nice for you." Kyra avoided eye contact - she was still kicking herself for the way she'd spoken to Artair.

"It's funny," she scoffed. "They may have been awful...but no one deserves this," she added, her fists relaxing but still in a clenched position. Artair turned her around and lifted her chin gently so that she had to look at him. "Artair..."

"I know," he cut across. "I'm not here for that. I'm just here to be a friend," he comforted, placing his hands on her shoulders. "I can at least be that for now, right?"

"You still make it sound as if it's going to happen," Kyra pointed out, unable to keep the distaste from her voice. Thankfully she was saved from the situation by Heather calling them over to the group who were discussing the ultimatum Wavewing had made after Hiccup had translated it.

"I still say it's dirty play," Snotlout huffed. "How can you expect to fight a dragon without a dragon or Kyra?"

"Hey, we've done it before," Hiccup pointed out nervously. He'd already tried explaining his dad and Gobber how he had no idea how he was alive but they'd insisted on getting a full explanation later, despite his protests.

"Yeah, but those were with these guys," Fishlegs reminded everyone, indicating the team's dragons. "We've never fought something Wavewing's size without dragons before."

"Meh â€" there's always a first time," Gobber shrugged. "After all, we took on the Boneknapper without dragons and still prevailed."

"Only after you finally decided to give him back his bone," Ruffnut drooled sarcastically.

"I still get nightmares about that," Tuffnut mumbled.

"And that wasn't exactly defeating a dragon the old-fashioned way," Astrid explained. "We tamed him â€" something tells me we can't do that with Wavewing."

"I'm with Astrid on that," Kyra agreed. "And with Snotlout â€" this is unfair play." Hiccup also agreed with his cousin but he had no choice â€" there was no telling what Wavewing would do if he turned up with a dragon or Kyra. He didn't want to take too many risks. "What are we going to do?" she asked him. Hiccup thought for a while.

"Well, we're gonna need bigger pieces of oak, that's for sure," he noted. "Those bolts weren't doing much to him in the end." Tuffnut suddenly cut in.

"Okay, question: why is oak necessary?" he asked irritably, more at the fact that he had to ask a question than anything else.

"It's one of the only things that can kill a sea dragon," Hiccup explained. "That was one of the first things Wavewing ever told me and I swear I'm gonna make him regret that he ever did." Astrid raised her eyebrows â€" wow, she hadn't seen Hiccup as determined as this since he'd persuaded her to keep quiet about the location of the Dragon's Nest.

"Never the best thing to do," Stoick noted. Hiccup made a face but his dad ignored it. "You may need to use a longbow, son â€" at any rate an arrow made of oak may do more damage if what you say is true."

"And if all else fails, we'll stick a log in his path if we need to," Heather shrugged although even she wasn't convinced by her own suggestion especially seeing as Wavewing had forbidden Hiccup from having help from anyone except one person alone and no dragons. "Thing is, who's gonna go with you?"

"I am," Astrid replied instantly. Hiccup winced but he knew there would be no dissuading her so he made no move to protest. Kyra huffed - she would have preferred it if Ivor showed up and helped Hiccup out given that it was the least he could do right now after what he'd done but he still hadn't shown his face since the night before. She was beginning to doubt the guy and it took a lot for Kyra to get genuinely angry at the gods whom she knew could have funny ways of showing support. "If there's anyone Wavewing needs to answer to other than Hiccup it's me."

A fifteen minute argument might have ensued if it were not for the

fact that Astrid was giving everyone her death glare again.

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The only way out to the Weedsnakes' territory was either by boat or by dragon â€" in the end Stoick asked the Defenders of Berk to pull the ship along to speed things up otherwise there was no way they would get there whilst it was still light enough for Hiccup to see where he was going.

"One question â€" how're we supposed to fight this guy underwater?" Astrid frowned, watching the waves go past as she leaned over the rail. Hiccup was sorting out some arrow shafts on the main deck â€" Kyra had allowed him to borrow her bow, which had actually been fashioned from her staff which she normally used to channel her magic ("I'm still with you in a sense that way.") for the upcoming fight.

"Beats me," he replied, chucking another shaft into the pile whilst Gobber took care of the fletchings and heads â€" they were barbed iron tips which would make sure the arrow stuck. "Unless Kyra can do something to allow us to breath underwater..."

"What did I say about transformations?" Kyra snapped from above, pulling the ship along at full speed with the other dragons.

"I still think Fiddlesticks was more useful as a Terror!"

"I'm being serious!" Astrid snapped.

"I'm thinking, alright!" Kyra huffed. Artair was keeping a lookout in the crow's nest and quickly glanced at Hiccup.

"How in Thor's name did you pull out of that one, anyway?" he asked. The question had been burning on everyone's minds since Hiccup had come out of the Infirmary alive. "There's no way anyone could have survived something like that."

"Well, you know me," Hiccup shrugged, wincing slightly as his chest twinged slightly. It still hurt when he thought about it and when something brushed against it. "Surviving near fatal situations â€" my middle name."

"Don't get cocky because you've somehow managed to survive being struck by lightning multiple times plus a lot of other things," Astrid glared at him. Hiccup cringed â€" at least he hadn't lost his other leg. That had really been what he'd been most relieved about at the time. It was then that Astrid noticed something about Hiccup's bandages. "What's happened there?"

Hiccup glanced down to see that his bandages had been slightly singed in the area where his wound was. Gently rubbing the fabric, he confirmed that a small fire had in fact been there at some point.

"Dunno," he frowned. "Looks too small to have come from the Weedsnake hitting the Infirmary."

"**I got you out by then,**" Toothless pointed out nearby, still ticked that he wasn't allowed to accompany his best friend. It was

only Windwalker being nearby that kept him calm enough to not go into an angry frenzy. "***It was there before.**"

"Hey, Astrid," Kyra asked from above. "Didn't you say there was a Night Fury with you last night when you were with Hiccup?"

"Yeah, and didn't you say that it wasn't Toothless?" Astrid sagged, wondering what on earth this had to do with anything. Kyra flew down for a moment, letting Windwalker take over.

"Ivor, the God of Spirit, has the ability to shape-shift," she began explaining when Hiccup jolted.

"Ivor?!" he spluttered.

"It's okay!" Kyra assured her brother quickly. "I got him back to his senses."

"And how in Valhalla did you pull that one off?"

"You did, actually," Kyra noted, crossing her arms. "Your actions meant that the fate of the dragons' gods â€" brother killing sister â€" couldn't be carried out. That freed Ivor from his own curse."

"Even now?" Hiccup made a face, raising an eyebrow in cynicism.

"Even now," Kyra confirmed. "I think we both know that you would never lift a finger against me."

"I couldn't if I tried," Hiccup scowled jokingly. Kyra smirked and went back to explaining.

"I should have mentioned this before but remember when Iv...the Darkwing first attacked?" she reminded the team, correcting herself briefly â€" she didn't want to associate Ivor with the Darkwing if she could help it despite how irritated she was at the moment with him not showing his face. "The curses and jinxes came into effect with the object they're aimed at comes into contact with its fire."

"Of course!" Fishlegs noted from Meatlug. "A dragon's power comes from its fire!"

"So it's 'fire power'?" Tuffnut snickered. Ruffnut punched him and told him to shut up.

"Not exactly," Kyra explained. "There's the normal fire that dragons use, then there's enchanted fire that only affects what is meant to caught in the curse." That explained why the Vikings weren't effect by Wavewing's fire before.

"That'll explain why you shot a fireball in my face back then, huh, buddy?" Hiccup realised, glancing over at Toothless who looked rather smug. Not any dragon could prevent a dragon's curse from taking full effect so he was rather pleased with himself.

"Also why the tail fin froze when it got caught in the fire," Astrid realised as well, remembering when Kyra shot a Night Fury fireball at

Toothless' frozen tail fin to get it working again. "So, what you're saying is..."

"Yes," Kyra nodded. "The Night Fury you saw â€" it had emerald-green eyes, not bright green ones like Toothless. That was Ivor and..."

"When I wasn't looking, he used enchanted fire to help heal Hiccup," Astrid finished. Hiccup's green eyes were as wide as saucers â€" so the guy who'd cursed him in the first place and pulled him from the brink of death? That was saying something in terms of redemption. "But why only partially? He's still hurt!"

"Uh, beg your pardon, but '_he_' has a name and is sitting ten yards to your right," Hiccup scowled sarcastically. He didn't care if Astrid was going to punch him for it â€" he just wanted to get his point across that he was still there.

"I'm guessing it's because there's only so much dragon magic can do," Kyra sighed. "As well as so much one person can take. Hiccup's already been under a curse for three years and a powerful one at that. No, it was best that Ivor made sure you had the strength to pull through so that your body could heal itself," she finished, looking directly at Hiccup who nodded his understanding. He, personally, had had enough of magic for a lifetime.

"STOP THE BOAT!" Artair suddenly yelled from the crow's nest. The dragons jolted to a halt and hovered in the air to keep the boat in place as a violet wall of fire sprung up in front of them, preventing them from going any further.

"What is it?" Astrid called up. Kyra was already on the job and leapt into the air. Once she was about sixty feet away from the boat, just before she reached the fire barrier, she froze in midair, her Night Fury wings beating strongly as she remained motionless above the waves. "Kyra, what do you see?"

"I think we've just answered your earlier question, Astrid," Kyra called back. Hiccup scrambled up the rigging and pulled out his telescope to find out what was going on to see that his older sister was right. Astrid's question as to how they were supposed to fight underwater had been answered.

Where the Weedsnake territory was, there was a patch of seafloor surrounded on all sides by a constantly churning wall of water.

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Hiccup strapped the quiver of arrows onto his back and hooked Kyra's longbow over his shoulder, trying to hide a wince as the string caught his chest. Astrid was armed and ready with a crossbow as well as her axe but both teens still felt unprepared. Hiccup glanced over at Astrid and could see the fear hidden behind the determined face she'd put on â€" he knew that he, at least, had to make this count, if not for himself or Berk, but for her.

"How're you two supposed to get over there, anyway?" Snotlout called from Hookfang.

"Snotlout's right â€" I don't think we can go much closer without putting the ship in danger," Fishlegs chimed in. A roar sounded in reply, causing everyone to cover their ears. Kyra and Hiccup instantly recognised the voice.

"**Well, I was wondering when you were going to show up,**" the evilly dry tone of Wavewing sounded, warbled from beneath the waves. Kyra growled next to her brother.

"**This is dirty play,**" she hissed.

"**No one asked you to butt in!**"

"**Hey! Hiccup can ***_understand_*** Dragonese, but he can't speak it!**"

"In case you hadn't noticed, Kyra â€" he can hear me speak," Hiccup interrupted before a deadly argument could ensue between the Weedsnake Elder and the Dragon Shifter. Kyra bristled visibly but knew that her brother had a point â€" he may still have the quietest voice imaginable by Viking standards but that didn't matter to dragons, who could hear a human shout from ten miles away.

"**Which shall it be, Hiccup?**" Wavewing taunted, hidden from view but close enough for everyone to hear him. "**Will you face me on your own or are you too scared to face your maker by yourself?**"

"I won't be alone," Hiccup grumbled. "But that doesn't mean I'm scared to fight you one on one." Astrid flushed slightly in admiration of Hiccup's courage. "Besides, it's only fair â€" you're the one who destroyed your entire school for power," he added in distain. Kyra shuddered as the sea boiled slightly in Wavewing's anger.

"**You've got nerve, boy,**" the dragon snarled, hidden beneath the waves. "**I'd hoped I'd be able to snap that out of you...**"

"Well, Vikings have stubbornness issues," Hiccup shrugged. "Deal with it."

"How do we get to you?" Astrid cut in, although she had no idea what the other half of the conversation was saying.

"**Your Astrid, I presume,**" Wavewing noted dryly. Hiccup clenched his fists. "**I take it she is willing to stay with you in your final moments.**"

"Your mate would have too," Hiccup pointed out sadly, remembering one of the first things Wavewing had told him about the Darkwing in that he knew what it was like to have someone so close to his heart torn away from him. "Humans aren't that much different to dragons." Wavewing growled audibly, even from under the water, at the mention of it.

"**I will allow your dragons to take you here. Know this, though â€" as soon as you lay a foot on the sea floor, they must leave.**"

Hiccup translated the sentence for the others before looking at his father.

"Son," Stoick sighed. "You don't have to do this..."

"Yes, I do, Dad and you know it," Hiccup replied.

"You're hurt...you're hardly fit to fight."

"What choice do I have?" Hiccup argued. "You saw how powerful he's become. If I don't do something about it...it could be the Red Death all over again. It's what he wants â€" I can't let that happen." He paused. "Dad, I need you to trust me on this."

"I do, Hiccup," Stoick sighed sadly, his greying eyebrows almost obscuring his eyes from sight. The pair remained silent for a while before Hiccup turned to head over to Astrid on Stormfly (he couldn't fly Toothless over seeing as the Night Fury wouldn't be able to fly back on his own). Just as he did so, however, Stoick gently pulled his son into a hug that seemed to last forever. Hiccup buried his face into his dad's shoulder, now just about being tall enough to reach it and knowing that this could very well be the last time he saw his father. Words passed unspoken between the two that even Gobber didn't need to step in to explain what the other wanted to say â€" father and son understood each other more in this one moment than they had in their entire lives.

"Bye...Dad," Hiccup gulped, breaking the hug and jogging over to Astrid who helped him up onto Stormfly. Gobber stood up from his seat and walked over.

"Now, remember what I taught you," he said, trying to sound tough but there was no hiding the sadness in his voice. "The whole village is rooting for you. Go give that beast what for!" Hiccup couldn't keep back a small snort â€" his mentor knew what to say when it was needed.

"Don't worry," Astrid replied, although her conviction wasn't all there either. "We'll be out before sundown."

"I'll have the homecoming party planned," Kyra joked weakly next to Artair. Hiccup could see their hands entwined at their sides although he wasn't sure if either had noticed. He looked at Artair and grinned though.

"Hey, Artair," he tried to smile but it came out more as a grimace. "If I don't make it outta this..."

"Yeah?" Artair pressed. Hiccup's gaze shifted between the dark-haired teenager and his sister before he replied.

"Take care of her," he requested. "Regardless of what happens between you two." Kyra blushed despite herself, as did Artair, as Astrid gently nudged Stormfly into action and the two teens took to the skies. Toothless whimpered sadly as his best friend looked back in equal sorrow â€" Hiccup whispered in a strained voice for Toothless to take care of himself and Toothless mumbled a quick sentence in Dragonese asking Hiccup to just come home. He also muttered the sentence again as a prayer, hoping beyond hope that he would be heard.

As the giant arena came into view, Astrid gulped at the sheer scale

of the thing. It was as if someone had built invisible walls around the area to stop the water from getting in â€" that was when she spotted the violet flames surrounding the perimeter. She and Hiccup were going to be lucky to get out of this.

"Something's telling me that chances of survival are gonna be slim even if we do beat him," she muttered nervously.

"Yay for the vote of confidence, Astrid," Hiccup mumbled back.

"I mean it," Astrid huffed. "Kyra said a dragon's power comes from its fire, right?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, what if the fire's magic comes from the dragon?" Astrid wondered fearfully, indicating the flames. Hiccup caught on with what his fianc e was saying.

"I guess if Wavewing's going down he wants to at least take me with him," he made a face. Astrid had a point â€" Kyra had once told him that magic was nothing without a source. If Wavewing was defeated, then the magic keeping the ocean from falling in would vanish and if drowning didn't kill the teens then the pressure from the water most certainly would.

"Well, if that's the case, we'll both go down taking him with us," Astrid decided firmly, her storm blue eyes locking gazes with Hiccup's forest green ones. In return, he smiled his trademark lopsided smile. "Ready?"

"Kinda..." Hiccup grimaced. "Let's go."

Astrid led Stormfly into a dive and just as they were about to hit the sandy seabed, the teens jumped off and Stormfly shot back into the skies, crying in Dragonese to her rider prayers of hope and wishing both of them luck. A single tear escaped from Astrid's eye as she watched her dragon vanish into the heavens before she and Hiccup darted their gazes around them.

They were now alone and at the mercy of the Weedsnake Elder.

19. 19: We've got One Shot

****Chapter Nineteen: We've Got One Shot****

Hiccup took the longbow off his back and readied himself. Astrid did the same and held up her crossbow in front of her, her axe in her other hand in case she needed it. She was briefly distracted by an axe poking up from the seabed â€" it looked familiar but she decided not to dwell on it. Moments later, both teens nearly jumped out of their skins as the now gargantuan Weedsnake Elder burst from the wall of ocean, drenching them in saltwater that stung Hiccup's stab wound like Hel.

Wavewing no longer had an appearance that invited trust from those who saw him. The lines of wisdom that had been etched into his brow had deepened to form angry wrinkles that stretched all the way across his head. His eyes, once the colour of liquid amber, had darkened to

the brightest shade of red that anyone could imagine from absorbing his own kind's power and sent chills down the spines of any human or dragon to have the misfortune to see them. His hide had darkened from twilight blue to pure black and his scales were rimmed with venomous red. His build was no longer serpentine but more muscular and his limbs were the length of ten Night Furies standing on top of each other from tail to nose.

Hiccup could no longer believe that this was the guardian he'd once trusted with his life.

"**So glad to see you could come, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III,**" Wavewing hissed. Astrid shuddered next to Hiccup, wishing she knew what was being said. "**Although I'm surprised to see you bring along another to die with. It's not like you to waste a life.**"

"Astrid's here by her choice, not mine," Hiccup growled back. Astrid nodded firmly, standing her ground now having gotten the general gist of the conversation.

"And that choice isn't changing any time soon," she snapped in her usual angry tone. She kept her fearsome glare plastered onto her round face even as Wavewing stared her down, his red irises burning against his dark face.

"**A fine choice for a mate, Hiccup, I must say,**" he taunted. "**No doubt she'd provide the backbone you so desperately need.**" Hiccup growled and his eyes narrowed into slits "no doubt if he had his sister's powers he would have entered the Shifter State by now. "**Of course, that is why you brought her with you, is it not?**"

Hiccup finally lost it and fired an arrow straight into Wavewing's nostril. The monstrous dragon reared up in agony and Hiccup yelled at Astrid to run.

"Follow me!" he cried, dragging her by the wrist towards the caves where the school of Weedsnakes, including himself, had once slept. The entrances were huge but not quite big enough for Wavewing in his current form to fit through so it gave the teens some cover at least. However, most of the inner cave entrances were out of immediate reach so Hiccup and Astrid darted into the lowest one they could find as Wavewing let loose a river of violet flames.

"Okay, so what's the plan now?" Astrid yelled over the crackling of the fire.

"Step One, get down here and find cover," Hiccup replied worriedly, ducking behind a boulder. His boot was already full of sand and he was starting to get irritated.

"What's Step Two?"

"Honestly, I didn't think we'd make it in here before he lost it..."

"HICCUP!" Astrid shrieked as Wavewing threatened to break through the entrance to the caves.

"Uh...split up!" Hiccup decided, darting in one direction out of his cover. "I'll distract him " when he opens his mouth, empty your

crossbow if you have to but whatever you do, DON'T MISS!" he yelled back. Astrid scrambled to her feet and clambered up the slippery rock to find a better vantage point, barely avoiding Wavewing as he crashed through the entrance to the caves. His eye came into view and she quickly shot a bolt into it, blinding him in one eye before she scurried to safety.

"**You can't hide forever, boy!**" Wavewing roared.

"Hasn't that line been overused a gazillion times?" Hiccup shouted from his hiding spot. Wavewing let out an angry squawk, giving Hiccup a chance to fire an arrow straight into the back of his throat. Wavewing contorted slightly but the one arrow clearly wasn't enough to down him. Hiccup ran to find a better area to shoot but upon seeing Astrid ran circles around the giant dragon, unsheathing his dagger and driving it into the deadly hide without hesitation. The dagger proved nothing more than a pinprick to Wavewing but it was enough to keep his attention on Hiccup. Astrid knelt down and readied herself to fire as Wavewing opened his mouth, flammable gas forming in the back of his throat.

Astrid shot five bolts in rapid succession, interrupting Wavewing from toasting Hiccup but it also brought his attention to her. He made a bite for her but she barely tumbled further into the cave. Wavewing's snout became stuck in the entrance and Astrid fired the remained of her crossbow bolts into his mouth but it still did little to weaken him. She was starting to doubt Hiccup's claim of oak being one of the things that could kill a sea dragon when her last bolt hit the roof of Wavewing's mouth. Wavewing screeched in pain and completely blocked the cave, leaving Astrid trapped. She abandoned her crossbow and began using her axe to try to create an escape route. She screamed when she saw the gas building up in Wavewing's throat again.

Hiccup heard Astrid scream and rammed an arrow as deep as he could into a gap in the otherwise diamond hard scales. The oak's essence began spreading like venom through Wavewing's veins and the pain it caused him was enough to send his head ripping through the roof of the cave. Hiccup raced into the opposite direction to avoid getting hit by the resulting debris but his left leg still ended up getting hit. Upon seeing her fiancÃ© stumble. Astrid raced from her spot to help him, barely shoving him out of the way as Wavewing swung his head down in an attempt to crush them both.

"Step Three?" Astrid asked despite herself as Hiccup slowly got to his feet.

"Run," he replied.

"Good idea."

The teens ran for the nearest cave which Hiccup recognised as his old sleeping quarters. The entrance was far too small for Wavewing to fit through and it gave the teens enough time to escape through the hole in the rock Hiccup had called a 'window' when he'd resided there (he refused to say 'lived'). They stumbled away onto the damp sand just as Wavewing annihilated the caves entirely, leaving the pair out in the open with a pile of rocks laying behind them.

Outside the caves, the heat of the flames was balanced by the spray

from the ocean walls meaning that Hiccup and Astrid were in a constant state of getting wet and drying out. Salt clung to their clothes and stung their cuts from the fight so far. The spray also got into Astrid's eyes and she stumbled around blindly for a while until Hiccup grew so concerned for her safety that he had to shove her out of the way as Wavewing made to crush them again.

Hiccup knocked another arrow to the string of the longbow and waited for his chance. His leg was throbbing painfully and his stab wound was barely holding together as he could feel his skin threatening to tear apart. His breathing was shallow and quick and he was barely able to think straight. Then again, keeping his head on his shoulders in dangerous situations was what the seventeen year old did best â€" he just had to use his unusual ability to its full potential if he wanted to save both his world and the dragons from the monster in front of him.

"Why did you risk it?" he panted as Wavewing turned his attention to him. "There was no guarantee dragons would win the Gods' War if it happened â€" why would you chance it?"

"**Why did your tribe chance going to an island they knew to be infested with dragons where they first sailed to your home?**" Wavewing bit back. Hiccup couldn't help but shrug â€" the Niflheim he knew. "**You're right â€" dragons aren't so different to humans. We fight for dominance over what we know is rightfully ours â€" that is why we take chances when we can.**"

"Yeah, but it was just you," Hiccup pointed out. "I don't see any other types of dragons trying to get me to kill Kyra."

"**Don't play dumb with me, boy! I know full well that your sister told you about my kind,**" Wavewing spat. Hiccup remembered too well â€" Kyra had mentioned that Weedsnakes were a breed of dragon that would do anything for power. "**It makes Weedsnakes the closest to your kind, wouldn't you say?**"

"Maybe some â€" and I can name a few â€" but at least my people don't turn against their own family to get what they want!" Hiccup bellowed, firing an arrow into Wavewing's other eye and completely blinding him. Nearby, Astrid regained shook the sand and rubbed the salt from her eyes, regaining her vision and picking herself up from the sand. Nearby she could make out the shape of two axes, one of which was her own. The other one, however, was one that looked strikingly familiar. Shaking her head clear and deafened by the torrent of water close by, Astrid examined the axe and instantly recognised it.

The axe had two blades made of solid iron â€" a relatively old one compared to the stronger alloys Hiccup and Gobber had designed a few years ago. The handle was simply carved with dragons designs all the way along the strong wood. One of the blades took Astrid's interest in particular â€" there was a distinct crack all the way down the blade as well as a large chip in the metal where the rest of the blade had been sharpened to razor thinness. It was Astrid's mother's old axe which Astrid had given Hiccup to sharpen all those years ago.

"It ended up all the way out here?" Astrid wondered aloud. Examining the handle further, she suddenly remembered what it was made of â€"

oak.

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Kyra winced as she heard the cries of Wavewing from the boat and the shrieks coming from Hiccup and Astrid. She'd tried following Hiccup and Astrid out to the basin, as had the other Defenders of Berk, but every time they tried, the wall of fire blocked their path, preventing them from getting further than sixty yards from the boat. Astrid and Hiccup were holding out but Kyra knew that even if they did win there would be no way for them to get out of the basin "even Kyra couldn't fly fast enough to get to them in time and she couldn't risk being seen by Wavewing out of fear for their safety...not that it was there in the first place.

"This isn't right!" she cried out for the nth time running. "We shouldn't just have to sit here!"

"Hey, if it wasn't for the fact that we can't actually get any closer than we already are because of those flames, I'd be down there with them," Heather snapped from Newtsbreath, although her fingernails were now bitten so much from nervousness Kyra was amazed there was anything but the cuticle left. "But we need to trust Hiccup to know what he's doing "we've done so in the past and we need to do the same now."

"It's not that I don't trust my brother, Heather," Kyra moaned, gripping her dark auburn hair so much it was on the verge of being torn out. "There's no way they'll be able to get out "we'd never get there in time!"

"Uh, guys..." Snotlout called. "Since when did we have another Night Fury on the team?"

Kyra squinted to where her cousin was indicating and spotted the familiar black shadow of a Night Fury. For some reason she hadn't sensed it and she quickly saw the reason why as the Night Fury snapped its head round to look at her. Instead of the usual bright green, the dragon's eyes were the same colour of emeralds. It regarded her for a moment before vanishing into the clouds.

"Hey! WAIT!" Kyra screeched. "Come back! They need...!" Too late. The Night Fury had gone. Kyra couldn't help but feel slightly betrayed "Ivor had promised he'd come back but now where was he going? The eighteen year old stared after the dragon with tears brimming in her eyes. "Please...help them..."

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Hiccup was running out of arrows fast. Off the eighteen that he had been able to make coming out here, he had five left. The others had either stuck in the back of Wavewing's throat (he'd managed to stick eight of them and they had weakened the Weedsnake Elder if only slightly), one was buried in his left eye socket, three had missed their target and one was stuck in Wavewing's hide.

He's too strong, Hiccup thought to himself. If the arrows and bolts haven't done the job already, he's gonna have to swallow something to kick the bucket... He rolled out of the way to avoid Wavewing's tail swipe when the dragon suddenly screeched. Hiccup

shook his head clear to see Astrid pin the Weedsnake's tail to the ground with her axe " Hiccup would have called her crazy if he hadn't seen the other one strapped onto her back. Astrid quickly dodged Wavewing's flame attack as he tried to roast her (Hiccup was grateful he wasn't using curses) and legged it over to Hiccup where he repeated his thoughts as Wavewing's attentions were focused on dislodging his tail.

"Well, if that's the case, I've got a plan," Astrid panted, indicating the axe on her back. Hiccup recognised it as her mother's - the one he'd left in the sand all those days ago during his gathering trip. Astrid whispered to him that the handle was oak " if they could get a piece of wood that big as well as the rest of Hiccup's arrows down Wavewing's gullet, they may stand a chance. Astrid helped Hiccup to his feet and they ran in the opposite direction as Wavewing sent another stream of violet flame their way. Astrid was amazed he still knew where they were after being blinded.

"**You two are so noisy it's a miracle I got any sleep with you around, Hiccup!**" Wavewing snapped when Astrid voiced this aloud. But we're quiet enough to keep planning, Astrid noted silently to herself. Wavewing made a snap for her but Hiccup got in the way and fired one of his five remaining arrows straight into Wavewing's tonsils, the shock from the longbow rippling through his arm and into his body. The oak shafts were affecting the dragon a lot more now that he'd been weakened and his thrashing around had become a lot more violent so the teens had to work a lot harder to avoid getting hurt.

"Four left!" Hiccup yelled to Astrid and he somersaulted over Wavewing's claw as well as getting another irritating stab at the beast's foot.

"Just hold out a bit longer, okay!" Astrid yelled back. She had to admit she was impressed with Hiccup's combat skills " it was hard to believe that the young man she was fighting with now was the same boy she'd once despised for beating her in Dragon Training. She was gripping her mother's axe so tightly her knuckles had turned white and her bright blonde hair was darkened by the salt water. Hiccup's already messy mop was stiffened with salt and his brow was glistening with sweat and spray (not to mention he was starting to regret the leather armour). However, despite their weariness and the difficulty of fighting in soft wet sand, the determination never vanished from their eyes.

Before long Hiccup had shot the last of his arrows straight into the back of Wavewing's mouth. The Weedsnake was now significantly weakened as the oak's toxins ran through his body " his scales had reverted to their old twilight blue and he'd shrunk in size to resemble a more serpentine creature once again but his eyes were still bright red, albeit glazed and scarred from the arrows that had blinded him, and he was still more than strong enough to take down anyone in his path should he choose to. Hiccup stood his ground, panting with the longbow in his hands and looking almost in pity at the dragon before him. This was the first time Hiccup knew that he had to kill a dragon the old-fashioned way...he'd never felt the need to do this before.

"There's still a chance to turn back, you know," he sighed sadly.

Wavewing's eyes, scarred, crimson in more ways than one and full of hate, glared in his direction, not quite being able to focus on him. The wrinkles on his face no longer looked evil or wise "Hiccup felt a pang of sorrow as he saw the dragon and how old and tired he looked. "You don't have to do this."

"**Hiccup, tell me this,**" Wavewing huffed as he recovered slightly from the last arrow. His breathing had gotten heavier with each shot and now he was barely standing. "**What was the first thing that I ever taught you when you came to the school?**"

Hiccup scrunched his face in an attempt to remember. In all honestly, he couldn't recall anyone teaching him anything during his time as a half-dragon. He'd just tried to fit in the best he could at the time.

"Something in the back of my head tells me that you never really taught me anything," he replied dryly.

"**Really?**" Wavewing noted tiredly, slowly getting to his feet. Astrid circled the two nearby, her mother's axe gripped in her hand. "**Because as the Elder of my school, it was my duty to get at least this lesson into every youngling's head as soon as I could from the moment they were born.**" He paused before he seemed to remember something. "**I at least told you that day on the beach " the day I gave you that necklace.**"

"Remind me," Hiccup couldn't help but reply sarcastically. Honestly, he wasn't too bothered with remembering every detail of conversations and his memory wasn't exactly at its best in the middle of battle. Wavewing's tail suddenly swung round, catching the young man in the side and flinging him onto the pile of rock that had once been the caves. The force was so hard that Hiccup fell through the rocks into what remained of the main chamber.

"HICCUP!" Astrid yelled, racing over as Wavewing bashed her into the chamber as well. She fell on top of Hiccup and he cried out in agony as his stab wound reopened at the surface and blood began staining the bandages once again. "Hiccup " stay with me! We can do this!" Astrid begged. Hiccup winced and tried to staunch the wound but it was proving difficult. Astrid glanced around them and noticed that there were no escape routes save for where they'd just fallen in. And that route was blocked by the shadow of an almost expired Wavewing.

"**That my species is one that will do anything to get what they want,**" Wavewing hissed in reply to Hiccup's question. "**Once a Weedsnake is set on a goal, they stop at absolutely ****_nothing_**** to achieve it!**" Hiccup and Astrid held each other close. Astrid still had her mother's axe " they had one shot at this. If they failed, the entire Archipelago was likely doomed. "**So don't even think that I will seize any opportunity to back out now, ****_Little One!_****" Wavewing continued hatefully, spitting on the two teens. "**My time in this world may be short but let me assure you that every last human shall bear the brunt of my power!**"

"Yeah, yeah " cut the clichÃ©s," Astrid snapped although the fear was still clear as crystal in her voice. This only served to rile up the Weedsnake Elder further and he reared his head up for what the teens knew would be the final strike...and their last chance.

"Wait for it, Astrid," Hiccup grimaced as Astrid helped him to his feet. Astrid readied the axe in one hand and supported Hiccup with the other. Wavewing glared down on them.

"**You've cheated Death one too many times, boy,**" he hissed. Hiccup couldn't come up with a witty remark to that one and simply glared back as Wavewing charged down, mouth open wide ready to end their existences once and for all.

"NOW!" Hiccup screeched, pushing Astrid out of the way as she threw her mother's axe straight into the Weedsnake's gullet. The double-bladed weapon stuck fast in the beast's throat and Wavewing could only swallow to remove it.

That action proved fatal as Wavewing's body finally lost its tolerance for the toxin that the oak bolts, arrows and axe handle had delivered. His body began contorting in ways thought impossible and his screams could have been heard from Rome. Hiccup and Astrid scrambled up the fallen rocks to the exits as Wavewing, the Weedsnake Elder, shared the fate of his school and fell still on the ocean floor, his face frozen into one of pure agony.

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Everyone waiting for Hiccup and Astrid had to cover their ears at the sound of the shriek. Kyra had heard Hiccup's signal "for what it had been for, she did not know" but she could only hope they were okay. The Defenders of Berk began cheering, knowing that finally the threat of the Weedsnakes had been fully eradicated. Kyra on the other hand, couldn't celebrate. As soon as the shrill dying scream of Wavewing had pierced through the air, the ocean walls of the basin had begun to collapse in on themselves. Now that the flame barriers were gone, despite knowing even she couldn't fly fast enough, Kyra leapt off the boat and began racing to the area as fast as her wings could carry her.

She was so focused on this that she failed to notice a Night Fury dive into the waves behind her.

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Hiccup and Astrid sprinted as fast as they could away from the water falling in on them out of pure instinct. The area of sand was getting smaller and smaller and they could no longer find the strength to run. Hiccup collapsed onto the sandy floor of the sea bed and Astrid fell not long after. Watching the dark green ocean closing in on them, they pulled each other into an embrace and waited for the inevitable.

What they didn't see was another giant dragon bursting through the wall of water just as the basin filled once again.

* * *

><p>AN: Yes, the axe used to deal the final blow was the axe from the 'Axe to Grind' deleted scene from HTTYD. As I said before, I liked that scene so I decided to make it canon for this story - I can imagine it taking place maybe just before the movie does (maybe a week or something?

****We're so close to the end now! I'm amazed with how well this has gone. Just a quick heads up, there is one more story in the Adventures of Valkyra Horrendous Haddock II series (couldn't come up with a better name) but the original was so poor I'm making a complete re-write of it, meaning a different plot and everything! So don't expect anything to come up for a good time to come but I'll be posting updates on my profile. In the meantime, I've got some other completed stories I can share with you guys until I get it done. Until then, reviews and constructive criticism welcome but no flames!****

20. 20: Taking Responsibilities

****Chapter Twenty: Taking Responsibilities****

Kyra froze in midair as she saw the basin fill. She'd barely reached it when it did – she hadn't even been able to catch a glimpse of Hiccup and Astrid before the sea closed in on itself. The boat had been pulled over by the force of the water and came to a rest just beneath her. Slowly and far from steadily, Kyra came back down to the deck where she burst into tears in her father's arms. The Defenders of Berk came down to the deck with their dragons and stared in solemn silence at the area where the battle had taken place.

"They did it..." Heather gulped, tears flowing from her pale green eyes. "They did it..."

"They saved us," Fishlegs added. "The entire Archipelago."

The twins and Snotlout remained silent, knowing that they couldn't think of anything suitable to say in this situation. Artair also stayed quiet. He'd barely known Hiccup and Astrid, yet that didn't make the pain of losing them any less. Gobber removed his helmet and bowed his head in sorrow, as did Stoick and the others wearing helmets. Even the dragons lowered their heads in sadness and respect, none more so than Stormfly and Toothless, both distraught at losing their riders and closest human friends.

Kyra glanced up at her father and nodded.

"We should go home," she murmured. "They need to know."

Stoick inclined his head and gave the order for the ship to turn back to Berk. The sun was setting over the horizon, dying the sky all shades of red, pink and orange as the starlit night sky began to cast its silken darkness over the world but whereas the stars would usually bring comfort to the Hairy Hooligan tribe, or any traveller wandering the seas at this time of the year, this time they only seemed to stare coldly from their posts in the heavens as the team slowly sailed back to their home island.

Docking the boat and heading back up to the village, it only took the sheer silence and the absence of the leading members of the Defenders of Berk to tell the rest of the Hooligans and the Meatheads what had happened. There were times when silence spoke louder than words, and this was one of those times. Kyra held back from the rest of the group, standing on the top of the path that led down to the docks gazing out to the ocean as the sun dipped below the horizon. Artair

stood next to her, placing a comforting hand around her shoulder "Kyra couldn't keep it in and buried her face in his chest, sobbing quietly as he tried to comfort her.

"It's okay..." Artair whispered, although he knew it was anything but okay. "Let it out."

Kyra, however, had already cried so much that she could no longer weep except in tiny streams that trickled down her oval-shaped face. She froze for a split second as she felt something warm come into contact with her head "Artair had just kissed her. Instead of recoiling, however, she hugged him closer until the sound of water spilling off a large body of something caught her attention. Her normal eye still bloodshot from crying, Kyra broke away from Artair and turned to face the bay, where a dragon resembling the High Diving Darkwing stood.

There was something different about this dragon, though. For one, it was smaller "maybe half the size of the Red Death Kyra guessed. Second, it's scales were a beautiful emerald-green dotted with silver that shone in the moonlight like diamonds in a torch-lit cavern. Its eyes matched the hue of its hide and were filled with wisdom, sympathy and even a hint of regret.

It was Ivor.

"**_Where did you go?_**" Kyra asked telepathically, still amazed she had any tears left in her. "**_Why did you go?_**"

"**_Their battle was not mine to fight,_**" Ivor replied gently, resting on the cliff side and lowering his majestic head so that he was eye to eye with the Dragon Shifter. "**_But they fought bravely. You should remember that._**"

"**_I know they fought bravely!_**" Kyra protested angrily. "**_I might be human but I could still hear them. The fight was hardly fair on them from the start! The fire barriers stopped us from getting any closer and we couldn't fly fast enough to get them out of there when it was..._**"

"**_Maybe,_**" Ivor admitted sadly. "**_There are things that even dragons cannot do. Reaching the speeds required to reach your brother and his beloved are impossible for a dragon...and therefore, regrettably you as well, Little Sister..._**" Kyra blinked in surprise at that. "**_...to achieve._**"

"Little Sister?" Kyra whispered aloud despite herself.

"**_Yes. As you said to me before, Lohikäärme lives within you and every Dragon Shifter before you. I believe it is only right to recognise that you are a little sister to me._**"

"**_That doesn't change anything,_**" Kyra sniffed. "**_My brother and best friend are gone._**" Ivor chuckled. "What's so funny?" Kyra snapped out loud this time, too irritated with the God of Spirit to bother with telepathic communication anymore.

"**_I said the speeds required to reach them weren't possible for you and ordinary dragons to achieve,_**" Ivor smiled slightly. "**_I never mentioned my own abilities._**" Kyra's eyes widened to the size

of saucers and the pupil of her dragon eye dilated so much you could barely see the bright green iris that surrounded it.

"You...you mean...?" she stammered. "You actually...?" Artair caught her change in tone and his face lit up as well, as did the rest of the Vikings' especially the Defenders of Berk. Ivor slowly opened his mouth and out tumbled two figures, dripping wet from both seawater and dragon saliva and with expressions of relief, exhaustion and exaltation plastered onto their faces. One was a young woman, her blonde plait darkened to the colour of wet sand and her storm blue eyes clouded with weariness but at the same time sparkling with joy. Being supported by her was a young man, his messy hair darkened to a deep brown and stuck to his oval face which was scrunched up in a mixture of pain and happiness whilst his forest green eyes glinted in the starlight.

"It's them!" Heather cried out in joy.

"They're okay!" someone else cried out.

"How'd they survive that?"

"Who cares?"

"The dragon brought them back alive!"

Kyra couldn't contain herself and ran over, taking both her brother and Astrid in her arms. The two teens hugged the eighteen year old back as much as they could, most of their energy spent. Kyra's tears turned into tears of joy and both Astrid and Hiccup began crying themselves in a mixture of relief and happiness. Stoick also ran over and took all three teens into a giant bear hug ("Dad! Can't breathe!" Hiccup mumbled) as the village cheered so loudly you could have heard the celebrations from the Rookery. The dragons howled and roared in triumph and Toothless and Stormfly darted over to their riders, licking their faces until Hiccup and Astrid burst out laughing despite themselves.

They'd made it.

Kyra broke away from the bear hug to look at Ivor who'd taken on his human form once again (upon noticing the village bowed before him, as did the dragons having regained their respect for their one remaining god. Ivor asked them to rise almost immediately though). This time, her face had lit up so much you could have probably been able to find your way in the dark without a torch. Her smile stretched from ear to ear and both eyes â€" human and dragon â€" were shining in her delight.

"You brought them back," she gulped happily, her words barely making it out of her mouth. "Thank you so much."

"It was the least I could do after causing them so much grief," Ivor replied mournfully. Hiccup and Astrid broke away from Stoick and turned to face their saviour. If it hadn't been for Ivor's actions, they would have made their final resting place in the same place as Wavewing â€" miles beneath the ocean.

"Can't we put that in the past?" Hiccup croaked, wincing as his wound twinged again. Astrid was focused on keeping the bleeding (though

minor compared to before) to a minimum. "Seriously â€" let bygones be bygones, you know?" Ivor let out a sad laugh.

"I wish it were that easy, Hiccup," he sighed. "Whilst humans live with their mistakes until their dying day, I have no such luxury." He paused. "I must live with everything I've done...forever." Astrid rolled her eyes weakly â€" her eyelashes were still heavy with salt.

"But that's just part of life, isn't it?" she pointed out, her voice raspy from all of the shouting she did earlier. "I mean, living with our mistakes if the only way we can learn from them â€" that way we can make amends." Ivor sighed.

"If I hadn't been so blinded before I might have been able to appreciate humans such as yourself, young woman," he remarked gently. "No doubt your Goddess, Freya may select you as a Valkyrie one day." Astrid couldn't help but flush with pride. "But there are amends that I cannot make...mistakes that I cannot rectify..."

"But that was before," Kyra argued. "Humans make mistakes that they can't fix too â€" you only need to look at what was going on in the world I was stuck in before for examples," she shuddered, remembering learning about terrible things humans had done in the past during History, one of the few subjects she could actually understand. "But that doesn't mean you can't start to mend what's broken. At any rate...she would have wanted you to try."

Ivor turned away for a moment and thought about things. It was true, what the teens had said. He couldn't run from his mistakes in the past, nor could he undo the damage they had done. His anger had destroyed his sister's life and his curse had taken three years of Hiccup's life that he could never have back. But he was still the God of Spirit and he couldn't shirk the responsibilities that now rested on his shoulders.

"It's ironic," he remarked. "Very often it is the beings of the mortal realms that turn to their gods, whether they be of Asgard or otherwise, to help. Yet here I am â€" a fallen god being helped by the very people whose lives he almost destroyed."

"Sometimes we need to look in places least expected for help," Astrid noted, darting a glance at Hiccup. "More often than not we just need to keep quiet and listen for a while." Ivor smiled despite himself and remained silent before walking towards the cliff edge.

"What will you do?" Hiccup asked hoarsely. Ivor turned back to face the young man whose appearance so closely resembled his own.

"Whether I feel ready or not, the dragons need me to take my sister's place," he replied sadly. "It may not be what I want anymore...but it is what I must do. Sometimes we have to face things that we don't want in life, but very often it is taking on the responsibilities we are given that help us make up for our past mistakes," he added. Kyra froze â€" her father had said exactly the same thing to her merely the night before. She could have sworn that sentence was aimed at her "Besides â€" I believe that the link between the worlds is in capable hands down here," Ivor finished, smiling kindly at Kyra.

"**_Why do I get the feeling you aimed that last statement at me? You know Dad said the exact same thing to me,**_" Kyra huffed telepathically. Ivor chuckled.

"**_Sometimes one has to take an elder's advice into consideration.**_"

"**_He's hardly your elder.**_"

"**_I wasn't talking about me,**_" Ivor replied plainly. He glanced at Artair who bowed in respect quickly. "It's alright, young man," the god assured. "I hardly deserve it anyway." Artair still avoided eye contact. Ivor turned back to face Kyra. "It may be your responsibility as the chief's daughter, but just consider if it is something more than that." Kyra flushed bright red despite herself, grateful for the cover the dark night provided. With that, Ivor leapt off the edge of the cliff, transformed into a Night Fury and vanished into the heavens.

Artair walked over to Kyra as the tribes and the dragons watch the restored God of Spirit return to his realm. He held her hand gently but remained quiet until Kyra spoke up.

"I'm sorry about before," she mumbled. Artair squeezed her hand in reply until grunts came from behind them. Turning around, Kyra snorted when she saw Hiccup being hoisted to his feet, battered, bruised, his prosthetic leg completely out of shape and his stab wound on the verge of causing him even more damage. Astrid was also being pulled along by the wrist by Gothi towards the Infirmary. Kyra jogged over and spotted some scribbles in the sand "everyone glanced over at Gobber.

"She said: _Get out of my way " those kids need treatment._"

"There's more than that," Snotlout pointed out. Gobber squinted and asked for a light which Kyra dutifully gave.

"She also says: _Anyone who disturbs me for the next twenty-four hours is going to milk the yaks...no! Hold up " that means...uh: _Clean the Infirmary and receive a blunt object to the head._"

Knowing how surprisingly efficient the Elder was with her staff everyone made a mental note to keep away from the Infirmary.

Gobber still thought the last bit looked like someone milking a yak.

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"OW! Ow...ouch, ouch, ouch...YEOW!" Hiccup yelped as Gothi treated his leg. "That hurt..." Gothi scribbled something on the floor. Gobber stood by for translations.

"She said: _If you'd stop squirming it wouldn't hurt as much_, " he remarked. "Also that you're more trouble than you're worth." Hiccup and Gothi gave him a look. "Okay, I made that last part up."

"Well, _sorry_ for not being unconscious this time around," Hiccup

replied dryly, wincing as Gothi's special ointment was smothered onto the stump that had once been his left leg. The stump itself had gone bright red and was on the verge of swelling so after replacing Hiccup's bandages around his chest, it had become Gothi's first priority. Nearby, Astrid was nursing a heavily bruised head, a broken arm, a dislocated shoulder and a broken ankle. It was the worst that Hiccup had ever seen Astrid come out of a fight.

"Look on the bright side," she mumbled through gritted teeth. "You're not on the brink of death anymore." Hiccup yelped again as Gothi began wrapping bandages tightly around his leg to stop it from swelling.

"_That's_ the bright side?" he grimaced. Astrid would have shrugged if her shoulder hadn't been so painful. "Gods...can't someone at least knock me out or something?" Gothi clonked him on the head and scribbled some more dust patterns.

"She says that you're damaged enough as it is," Gobber translated. Hiccup and Astrid rolled their eyes "well, _that_ was obvious but since when was Hiccup not spending his afternoons in the Infirmary, which at the moment was little more than a shack after the Weedsnake had burnt the old one to the ground before.

"Just think about it, though," Astrid winced as her head throbbed painfully and her ankle twinged. "At least we're off Stable Duties for an indefinite amount of time." Hiccup could only assume that was the one good thing about their conditions. "Maybe a Spring Wedding won't be too ideal," Astrid added. Hiccup made a face "he didn't mind if the wedding didn't take place in Spring. He just didn't want to make Astrid wait any longer than she already had. Wow...it felt like only yesterday that he'd let his feelings slip.

"Ah, don't you two worry your pretty little heads about it," Gobber chuckled. Hiccup and Astrid glared at him. "Kyra's getting everything sorted "also, if Gothi's skills are anything to go by, I'd say you should be fine by the time Devastating Winter is up."

Hiccup and Astrid didn't know whether to clap for joy or groan in frustration at Kyra's insistence on getting things done when people first said they wanted them done by.

21. 21: How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse

Chapter Twenty One: How to Cheat a Dragon's Curse

True to Gobber's word, Hiccup and Astrid were up and hobbling around the village by the time Devastating Winter had passed. True, their battle wounds were still giving them problems and many were going to leave a nasty scar (Astrid even had one forming on her chin to mirror Hiccup's. To this day Kyra still believes she'd done it on purpose somehow although Astrid denies it) but it was nothing a self-respecting Viking couldn't handle, although Astrid had to comply and use a set of wooden crutches for a while whilst her ankle recovered.

Spring was finally nearing the Isle of Berk and preparations were well underway for the most anticipated wedding in living memory. The ceremony was such a big event that the entire Meathead tribe and the

Bog Burglars had arrived to help (the Hysterics hadn't replied to the invite, much to Kyra's relief, and the Berserkers hadn't even been considered, neither had the Outcasts. Duh) and even Heather, her husband and their families had arrived to help. All the while, Kyra was sure to keep everyone busy and that Hiccup and Astrid had as comfortable a recovery as possible in preparation for the big day.

"It's not as if we can have the bride limping down the aisle, can we?" she pointed out one day as the bride-and-groom-to-be oversaw the proceedings. "And Hiccup â€" no need to worry about the grave robbing thing. I managed to talk Dad out of that one."

"Thank the gods!" Hiccup praised, casting his gaze skyward. Aside from the Trust Ceremony, he hadn't been too fond of the old tradition of Grave Robbing for a gift the night before the wedding. His father had often spoken about it so Hiccup was over the moon to get out of the event. Astrid, on the other hand, had still had to sort out a completely new wardrobe for her life as a married women, as per tradition so she'd been spending a lot of time with Runa to sort that out. Hiccup's attention was caught by Artair who was helping out with the decorations in the plaza. "How's it going between you guys?"

"..." Kyra blushed.

"I'll take that as 'well'?" Hiccup teased. It was kind of his job as Kyra's younger brother â€" he'd missed too much over the last three years to miss the opportunity.

"Shut up, Hatchet-Head," Kyra stammered.

"Kyra's got a boyfriend!" Snotlout sang nearby. Hiccup whistled and on cue Camicaze slammed into the guy's nose again. "OW!"

"Stop stealing my job!" Hiccup yelled half-heartedly. Kyra giggled slightly. "Seriously, though â€" what's going on?"

"It's better than it was," Kyra admitted.

"C'mon! It was good before plus I've noticed you're wearing your best dress again!" Astrid grinned slyly next to Hiccup. For once she wasn't using her crutches but she still needed to lean on something for support when she was standing still. Kyra flushed as pink as the gem on her necklace which glittered in the spring sunshine.

"Okay! Fine! It's going well between us and who knows? Maybe it will happen? I don't know!" she gave up, throwing her hands into the air. "Now if you two lovebirds will excuse me..." She sprouted Gronkle wings and hovered off to help with some decorations on the nearby houses. Hiccup laughed slightly and gently put some weight on his new prosthetic leg, which he'd had some more design input than the last one and had helped Gobber make. It was sleeker than his previous one and also more advanced design wise, allowing for more balance control and was also better suited to the stirrups of Toothless' flying harness, with changeable attachments to suit different situations. Hiccup was rather proud of it if he did say so himself.

"What is it with Haddocks and being socially awkward?" Astrid teased,

a playful smirk creeping onto her face.

"Here's to hoping the kids inherit your social skills," Hiccup joked, earning nothing but a gentle punch in the shoulder from Astrid. Somehow talking about family no longer seemed awkward. It seemed...right.

That was just it. Everything...from the villagers to the happenings on the Isle of Berk...just seemed right.

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The first month of spring passed and all of the necessary preparations for the wedding had taken place. Astrid's father and aunt, who'd taken the place of Astrid's late mother for the time being, had made the traditional offerings of goods and wealth to the Haddocks with the third lot of money as a dowry for Astrid herself. Hiccup, while he'd be in control of the money as a whole, would be unable to spend this himself â€" not that he minded in the slightest. Despite the breaking of the usual tradition of marrying in the autumn, the village was grateful for the warmer weather that spring brought with it and there was still enough pre-prepared mead to last the couple for their honeymoon (not that Hiccup or Astrid were looking forward to it â€" honey mead was far too sickly sweet for their liking).

The first day of the celebrations had already arrived (by Viking tradition, any wedding celebrations that only lasted less than three days were considered shabby and Kyra was determined for her brother's wedding to not be remembered as such). It was Frigg's Day Friday, the usual day of holding the main ceremony of a marriage, and the village was ready. The bride and groom...less so.

In his house, Hiccup adjusted his ceremonial belt for the nth time running. His helmet was covering the majority of his messy hair (it had refused to stay flat no matter how much Kyra attacked it with a comb) and he was wearing an adjusted version of the tunic that Astrid had made him for his fourteenth birthday, back when Kyra had only just come back to Berk. A bear skin cloak was pinned to his shoulders by armour plates made from silver and Hiccup was also wearing the chainmail his father had brought him for his fourteenth â€" again it was adjusted to fit him but looking in the glass, Hiccup barely recognised himself.

The man staring back at him from the other side of the glass wasn't Hiccup the Klutz of Berk â€" this was Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, soon-to-be Chief of Berk.

"Last day of being Hiccup the Useless, huh?" he mumbled. Stoick, Snotlout, Fishlegs and Tuffnut stood nearby.

"You never were...okay, maybe you were," Snotlout gave up the suck-up act when his cousin made a face. "But, yeah â€" you're right."

"Just get ready because this is the first day of Being-Stuck-with-the-Girl-Who-can-Easily-Make-Your-Life-a-Living-Helheim," Tuffnut snickered. In retaliation, Hiccup whistled, Snotlout ducked and Tuffnut was met by a familiar green and red Terrible Terror to his nose. "OW! I AM HURT! I AM VERY MUCH HURT!"

"Never get tired of hearing that one," Stoick chuckled nearby.

"I can't believe it's finally happening!" Fishlegs gushed. "This is gonna be, like, a wedding of weddings! The Dragon Tamer and the best warrior on the island? This will go down in history, like, a legend or something!"

"And you know what else will go down in history?" Snotlout groaned. "Your face if you don't shut up!"

"Guys..." Hiccup grumbled as he examined his family's ancestral sword. His mother should have been the one to give it to him when his father died, but unfortunately she couldn't even be around to see her son on the happiest day of his life. Stoick could clearly catch his son's feelings and ushered the other teens out before walking over. Even as an aging man, he still carried the grandeur of a great chief.

"She would be proud of you, son," he smiled. "As am I." Hiccup smiled back in equal pride â€" secretly he had the stuffed toy dragon his mother made him stashed into a pocket in his cape. That way, no matter what, his mother was still there with him that day. Still, Tuffnut had had a point earlier.

This was, indeed, the first day of the rest of his life.

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Astrid's aunt gently brushed her niece's bright blonde hair and carefully plaited it so that her fringe formed what Kyra described as a French Plait across the top of her head and the rest of her hair formed a pair of braids that framed either side of her face. For now she wasn't wearing any head decoration but Astrid had seen the outfit Kyra had made especially for her with Runa's help â€" the dress alone was stunning. At that moment in time Astrid was just wearing an off-white cotton under-dress whilst her hair was being done.

"You're gonna look amazing," Heather grinned nearby. She didn't look to shabby herself in her best dress and her black hair fashioned in a neat bun at the nape of her neck. Ruffnut also looked decently presentable for once with her usual greasy, dirty hair washed until it was paler than Astrid's and tied in neat plaits and wearing her best dress. For once, the usually tomboyish girl felt pretty. She hated it.

"Well, if Kyra's work is anything to go by..." Astrid smirked slightly. Kyra shrugged, dressed in her emerald-green gown, golden tiara and pink necklace â€" she was the very image of a young bride herself regardless.

"Hey, I've been working my backside off since Winter to get this sorted for you guys," Kyra laughed. "Trust me, Astrid â€" it'll be great."

"It's not that I don't trust you," Astrid sighed, mirroring exactly what Hiccup had said to Kyra when he'd found out she'd planned the engagement party all those years ago. "It's just...well..."

"Out with it," Ruffnut snickered. "It's not like you can keep any secrets from him after today." All women present glared at the girl â€" she needed to get it into her head that there were exceptions to the 'married couples don't keep secrets from each other' rule. Even so, Astrid spat it out.

"Okay, I'm nervous, alright?" she admitted as her aunt finished off the last plait.

"Now, don't you worry, lass," the old woman smiled kindly. "You'll be absolutely fine â€" Hiccup has grown to be a fine young man. I'm certain he'll make sure your life is as comfortable as it can be."

"You have to say that," Astrid groaned. "You're my aunt." She asked to be left with Kyra for a while so the others left the room as the two best friends sat down opposite each other. Astrid remained silent for a few seconds before talking. "I haven't exactly been the greatest of girlfriends, have I?" Kyra seemed struck by the question.

"Don't be ridiculous!" she protested. "You've stuck with Hiccup through so much! If that doesn't scream 'good girlfriend', I don't know what does."

"I meant that I haven't treated him too well, have I?" Astrid pointed out with a grimace. Kyra thought for a second.

"Okay, so your relationship has been a tad violent on your part," she shrugged in admittance. "Astrid â€" you know more than me than relationships aren't always easy. I'm not saying that violent relationships are good because they're not!" she blurted out quickly. "But just because you're a tough girl doesn't mean you're not good enough for my brother." She paused and smiled. "I don't think I would rather have anyone else as a sister-in-law."

"You're my best friend â€" it's your job to say that," Astrid smirked although the smirk changed into a smile before she could stop it.

"And we're Vikings," Kyra pointed out in a similar joking tone. "It's our job to be tough." Astrid laughed a little bit as Kyra stood up to collect her dress. "Come on â€" let's finish getting you ready."

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By the time the sun had reached its highest point in the sky, everything was ready. The Hairy Hooligan Tribe, the Meatheads and the Bog Burglars were all waiting outside in the plaza for the ceremony to begin. Hiccup stood by his father at the end of a long aisle (Kyra had set the whole thing up that way) trying his best not to fidget as Toothless stood nearby with Windwalker and Stormfly stood opposite with her mate, a Nadder that wasn't a native to Berk but had been nicknamed Spikes. Stoick saw Kyra dart from Astrid house with the signal that everything was ready and he gave the musicians the cue to begin.

A cheery tune struck up as the entire gathering was alerted to the presence of the bride's arrival. Turning around, Hiccup caught the

first glance of Astrid in her bridal gown and was immediately struck breathless by her beauty. Her main gown was floor length and made of white muslin with a decorative strip of blue, red and gold about a foot and a half off the ground with similar patterns at the ends of the mid length sleeves. Held up by two multicoloured straps and a belt with clasps depicting the Strike Class and the Sharp Class logos was Astrid's train, made of sky blue silk and hemmed with golden thread. On her forearms were silver armlets with Nordic patterns delicately engraved around pictures of dragons. On her head was a silver headpiece, the metal twisting around itself like a silver braid around her head with a deep blue sapphire inlaid in the front in between her two storm blue eyes.

Hiccup had to shake himself back into reality as Astrid reached the end of the aisle " she was even more beautiful up close.

"You look amazing," he mouthed to her quickly. She smiled and her face flushed pink.

"You look pretty good yourself," she mouthed back. Stoick cleared his throat and began the proceedings.

"Welcome, tribes of the Hooligans, Meatheads and Bog Burglars," he announced. "It is on this day " the first Frigg's Day of the Second Month of Spring " that we witness the joining of my son, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III " Hiccup Stoickson..." Hiccup flushed with pride at his father's usage of his other name. "...and his betrothed, Astrid Hofferson in marriage." He took his hammer " it very much resembled Mj  lnir " Thor's hammer " and signalled for the couple to kneel. They did so. "With this hammer, I look to the God of Lightning Thor to bless this couple and ensure that no matter what hardships they may face that you give them the strength to fight through it."

He placed the hammer carefully on Astrid's lap " she winced slightly as the additional weight was put on her still recovering ankle but she did her best to hide it. Likewise with Hiccup. Stoick then looked back to the sky and recited the next prayer, asking for the gods Frigg and Freya, the gods of marriage and love, to provide their blessings and give Hiccup and Astrid and happy and fruitful marriage, one that would hopefully continue to lead Berk and aid the Archipelago into a strong era for the Vikings. The couple then stood to perform the next part of the ceremony " the Rings.

"Astrid Hofferson," Hiccup said as gracefully as he could, holding his ancestral sword in front of him " balanced on the tip of the sword was Astrid's ring. _Damn, this is like the engagement party all over again_, he thought to himself. Hiccup was never that good with words when it came to situations like these. "I...know this had been a long time to wait..."

"Got that right!" someone (I think it was Tuffnut) shouted. It was followed by a cry of pain although how it came about no one was really sure (Kyra and Ruffnut were prime suspects). Hiccup ignored it the best that he could and continued.

"But do you take me to be your husband?" he finished awkwardly, slowly lowering the sword.

"You bet," Astrid smiled jokingly, holding her right hand out. Hiccup

carefully manoeuvred the sword so that it wouldn't give Astrid any more injuries and gently slipped the ring onto her finger. Astrid then picked up her own family's sword " it was shorter compared to the Haddocks' blade but it was still a piece of master metal work. "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III " as chieftain of this tribe, will you take me to be your wife?" Astrid asked with a playful glint in her eyes. Hiccup grinned back.

"Is the question necessary?" he joked. Astrid punched him playfully as she slipped his ring onto his finger with some master sword work. Stoick then took the Haddocks' family sword and placed it tip down between the two teens " they dutifully placed their hands on the top of the hilt as they began to recite the vows.

"Hiccup " do you, as the future chief of the Hairy Hooligan tribe of Berk, promise to provide for your wife in any way that she requires?" Stoick asked.

"I will," Hiccup replied, his voice growing more confident with every word. It didn't matter that three tribes were watching " as far as he was concerned, it was just him and Astrid present in the plaza at that time.

"And do you swear to protect her and any family she will bare you, even if it means the cost of your life?"

"I will."

"Astrid Hofferson " do you promise to care for your husband and fulfil your duties as the woman of the household?"

"I will," Astrid nodded certainly.

"And do you swear to stand by his side and support him, even through the darkest times of married life?"

"I will." There had been no hesitation from either teens as the vows were finished. Stoick smiled and nodded at his son who nodded back.

"Astrid, as my wife, I give you the stewardship of my family's blade," Hiccup recited, taking the ceremonial sword and holding it towards Astrid. "I ask that you keep it safe and, should it be the gods wishes for me to leave this life before you..." Astrid gave him a look that said '_You'd better not_'. "...that you pass it down to our first-born son and remind him of our family's heritage."

"I promise," Astrid smiled in return, taking the sword and holding it dutifully by her side ('_Okay, she's looking more like a Valkyrie every second,_' Hiccup thought). Stoick chuckled and began the final part of the main ceremony.

"Then, with the witness and the blessings of the gods, and all those gathered here today," he began. "It gives me the greatest pride to announce this couple man and wife." A cheer erupted from the crowd as Stoick laid the final blessing, joining Hiccup and Astrid together as a married couple. Kyra made a notion nearby. "Ah, yes " Hiccup, you may..."

"One second," Astrid cut in quickly. She stared at Hiccup for a while

before punching him squarely on the shoulder. "That's for making me wait," she smirked.

"Meh â€" I guess I deserved that," Hiccup chuckled, rubbing his shoulder. Stoick, along with the rest of the crowd, let out a booming laugh before the chief repeated what he was going to say.

"You may now kiss the bride," Stoick laughed. Instantly, Hiccup and Astrid locked lips and the world seemed to halt as the crowd burst into applause that could have been heard from Asgard.

And clearly, it was.

"Ho-ho!" a booming laughter sounded, shocking everyone out of their skins. Hiccup and Astrid glanced upwards to see what appeared to be a giant raven coming towards them. Instinctively, everyone fell to their knees until... "Honestly, this again?" Hiccup dared a peek upwards and recognised the man that stood before him â€" it was the same man that had set him on the path to regaining his humanity.

"Great timing, Odin," Kyra joked nearby. She was the only one who hadn't knelt but she gave the signal for everyone else to get to their feet.

"Well, Hiccup," Odin smiled kindly. "It's good to see you back to normal." Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck.

"Well, as normal as I'll ever be," he noted dryly. Odin chuckled. "To what do we owe the pleasure?"

"Just thought I'd come to give you my blessing in person," Odin explained. "I should also let you know that the others grant their own blessings freely and absolutely. Everyone in Asgard wishes the both of you a prosperous marriage."

"We're honoured, Your Excellence," Astrid curtsied. Odin smiled.

"Now, we'll be keeping an eye on the lot of you," he announced. "Knowing this island, who knows what trouble you'll land yourselves in?" A few Vikings shuddered but others, sensing the light heartedness from the King of the Gods laughed nervously. It didn't mean they weren't still scared of the gods. "Hiccup â€" just know that if you are ever in trouble, the gods are there for you. We just have a funny way of showing it."

"That's for sure," Hiccup remarked before he could stop himself. Still, thankfully Odin was in a good mood and he departed back to the heavens astride his giant raven.

The rest of the day seemed to fly past â€" the ceremony of Hiccup helping Astrid across a barrier onto the ceremonial boat went past without a hitch as Astrid didn't so much as falter as she made the transition from solid ground to the boat itself. As the village watched from the shores, the couple mounted their dragons and took to the skies â€" it was time for the final ceremony of the day.

"You ready for this?" Astrid called from Stormfly as she continued to gain altitude whilst Hiccup and Toothless stopped climbing. Any

nervousness that he'd had three years in the past had completely vanished as Hiccup grinned with a confidence that rivalled Astrid's.

"C'mon!" he called back. "How many times have I caught you after falling off Stormfly?"

"Once."

Yay for the confidence booster, Astrid. Still once was enough for the both of them as Astrid launched herself off Stormfly and began falling in a swan dive with her arms spread out like the wings of an eagle. Hiccup waited until she'd fallen past him before taking after her on Toothless – the pair went straight into a nosedive and came neck and neck with Astrid within seconds. To prevent her from getting hurt, Hiccup took Astrid's hand and helped her get onto Toothless' back right behind him. As soon as he felt her arms around his midriff, he pulled up and Toothless extended his wings to stop the fall, the downdraft causing the sea beneath them to spray outwards as the Night Fury with the newlyweds on his back took to the skies once again and the tribes burst into applause once again.

New Trust Ceremony? No problem.

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The entire evening was spent feasting. Astrid and Hiccup were surrounded by people offering their congratulations and wishes for a happy future and the general atmosphere was a true delight to behold. There was music, singing, dancing – you name it, it was happening. Even Hiccup and Astrid had managed to dance an entire hornpipe without missing a step (which is more than could be said for Ruffnut and Fishlegs whilst attempting a reel).

All the while, Kyra looked on at her brother and new sister-in-law in pride and happiness. Her heart swelled with joy for the both of them and it pleased her to see that after so long and going through so much they'd still pulled through. She was so enthralled by the celebrations that she didn't notice Artair walk up beside her.

"This is amazing," he commented, out of breath from dancing. "Care to dance?"

"Oh, believe me – you don't want to see me on the dance floor," Kyra replied jokingly. Artair laughed back, having heard stories of Kyra's past attempts to dance. "I'm so happy for them."

"They deserve it," Artair agreed. Subconsciously, Kyra rested her head on his shoulder and he placed his arm around hers. Both teens stood silent, taking in the sights of the party for a while. Artair then dug his hand into his pocket and closed his fingers around something – he wasn't sure how it would go, but he felt that this was right. He cleared his throat.

"What is it? Choke on a chicken wing or something?" Kyra asked half jokingly half serious. Artair shook his head.

"No, I'm fine, it's just...I wanted to ask you something," he replied, taking a tiny object out of his pocket. He didn't uncurl his fingers to show what it was so Kyra frowned slightly. "Listen, I know

that it started...weirdly with us, to say the least, but...over these last couple of months, I really think we've...I think there might be..."

"Something?" Kyra finished. Artair nodded. "I know what you mean..." she admitted, tucking a lock of hair behind her ear shyly. _WHY?_ she screamed in her head. Artair smiled.

"And, uh..." he stammered, taking Kyra's hand. "This isn't...I mean, I'm not asking this because it's my duty to," he spat out. Kyra's eyes widened as Artair's fingers uncurled to reveal a delicate ring made of intertwining bands of gold, silver and copper. "Rather I'm asking because I want to," Artair finished, his hazel gaze meeting the eyes of different greens on Kyra's oval face. Kyra's was stunned silent " true, things had been going well between her and Artair but she still hadn't actually expected him to figuratively pop the question!

Even so, her heart started beating so fast it was a miracle it didn't just give out. In her hesitation, a familiar motherly voice sounded in her head.

***_Admit it " you knew and wanted it to come._**" It was Windwalker.

***_What are you talking about?_**" Kyra asked, her gaze instantly shooting across the Great Hall to where the Star Backed Night Fury and her mate were sitting together over a spit roasted hog.

***_I mean that you knew this would happen from the moment you saw him,_**" Windwalker explained. ***_It's something us dragons can't help " you were just able to control it a bit more._**"

***_That makes little to no sense, Windwalker._**"

***_Kyra " dragons know when they've found their soul mate._**" Kyra needed no further explanations. It was true " as soon as dragons had found their match, they were together for life. As a human, Kyra's instincts when it came to this were slightly suppressed and she wanted to go slowly and avoid anything permanent. Turns out that all she'd been doing was hold off the inevitable " no wonder she felt the way she did around Artair. It wasn't something she could help even if she tried. She turned to face Artair again.

"Not because it's my duty," she smiled warmly, her eyes glittering in the firelight as she held out her hand to accept the ring. "But because I want to...with all my heart," she finished. Artair's smile widened and he slipped the ring onto her finger. The pair locked gazes for a split second before Kyra pulled Artair's face towards hers and they kissed, sealing the deal.

Across the hall, Hiccup and Astrid beamed from ear to ear upon seeing that their closest friend finally had the chance to experience the happiness they had now. Maybe a summer wedding wasn't as farfetched an idea after all. During this, Toothless purred contently as he and Windwalker gazed upon the celebrations and reflected on the past few years.

**_And there you go. The celebration of Hiccup and Astrid's wedding lasted a week and a half and to be perfectly honest, I don't think

half of the village actually remember any of it. Kyra and Artair were due to be married the following summer " I'm not going to go into too much detail on how Stoick coped with his daughter leaving home. First time I think any of us have actually seen the guy cry... Then again, these are Vikings we're talking about. They're not exactly the most predictable bunch._**

As it turns out, there's still a lot we need to learn about the world " both the humans' world and the dragons'. So far, at least, we've managed to cope with whatever life on Berk throws at us, whether it's death defying situations or even something that seems as trivial as a betrothal. But even if my rider's come close to death sixteen times now and Astrid's started her own tally we've been able to show, with a lot of patience and stubbornness born within every Viking, that it is indeed possible...

...to cheat a Dragon's Curse.

The End

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><p>AN: Well, here we are. The end of another story! Thank you guys so much for all of the support you've given this fanfic - it's meant a lot to me as a writer. Like I said, I'm working on the final story in this series but unfortunately it may not be published until the beginning of next year - I'll try my best to get it done as quickly as possible for you guys but until then, I've got a few more stories for you to read that I'll get going soon. Until then, reviews welcome but no flames and I'll see you guys around!

End
file.